

AFRICANUS JOURNAL

Vol. 3, No. 1 April 2011



This page intentionally left blank

Contents

- 2 Goals of the Journal
- 4 Life of Africanus
- 4 Other Front Matter
- 5 *Perpetually Connected?: The Effects and Implications of Ambient Technology on Christian Worshipers*
Jared E. Alcántara and Jeffrey D. Arthurs
- 16 Sexuality and the Image of God: Dangers in Evangelical and Roman Catholic Theologies of the Body
Megan K. DeFranza
- 27 Is He Risen Indeed? Challenges to Jesus' Resurrection from the Sanhedrin to the *Jesus Family Tomb*
William David Spencer
- 55 Dan Brown's Jesus-Fact or Fiction?
Susan Sogar
- 60 The Nickel Mines Massacre and the Amish Theology of the Atonement and Discipleship
Woodrow E. Walton
- 67 Review of *Closing the Window: Steps to Living Porn Free* by Tim Chester
Alexander J. Wei
- 69 Review of *No Stones: Women Redeemed from Sexual Addiction* by Marnie C. Ferree
Nancy West
- 72 Review of *Rooted in Jesus Christ: Toward a Radical Ecclesiology* by Daniel Izuzquiza
Adonis Vidu

- 75 Review of *Why Business Matters to God (And What Still Needs to Be Fixed)* by Jeff Van Duzer
David W. Gill
- 77 Review of *Pneuma and Logos: The Role of the Spirit in Biblical Hermeneutics* by John W. Wyckoff
Woodrow E. Walton
- 79 Review of *The Drama of Ephesians: Participating in the Triumph of God* by Timothy G. Gombis
Sang Soon Kim

Current Books from professors and students of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Boston Campus (Center for Urban Ministerial Education) are interspersed throughout the Journal.

Goals of the *Africanus Journal*

The *Africanus Journal* is an academic, multilingual journal. Its goals are to promote:

- a. the mission and work of the members and mentors of the Africanus Guild Ph.D. Research Program of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, based on the Boston campus (the Center for Urban Ministerial Education [CUME]).
- b. the principles of the Africanus Guild (evangelical orthodox Christian men and women who are multicultural, multiracial, urban-oriented, studying a Bible without error in a cooperative way).

Scholarly papers may be submitted normally by those who are in a Th.M., D.Min., Ph.D. program or have a Th.M., D.Min., Ph.D., Ed.D., or equivalent degree.

<http://www.gordonconwell.edu/boston/africanusjournal>

© 2011 by the Africanus Guild



"I am eternally grateful to the Africanus Guild, which has helped me fulfill God's call and realize a personal dream. I could not be working on my PhD in Old Testament without the financial help, prayers, and educational support I receive through the Guild."

—QUONEKUA DAY

Mentoring Scholars in a New Millennium

THE JULIUS AFRICANUS GUILD

was created at the Boston campus of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary with the purpose of identifying and nurturing evangelical minority doctoral students with the potential to impact the global Body of Christ significantly through their scholarship.

The Guild exists as a Ph.D. research support and mentoring program in collaboration with schools such as London School of Theology in England. The context of the Guild is urban and multicultural with an emphasis on developing scholars who can address difficult issues facing the church today with a commitment to the inerrancy of Scriptures and the contextual application of the principles found therein.

PARTNER WITH US

Please partner with us to help PhD candidates from constituencies underrepresented in the academy prepare to teach God's word in our increasingly multicultural urban centers.

Send your contribution to Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Development Office, 130 Essex Street, South Hamilton, MA 01982. Please indicate in the memo: Africanus Guild Scholarship.

**Gordon-Conwell
Theological Seminary**



SOUTH HAMILTON | CHARLOTTE | BOSTON | JACKSONVILLE

THINK Theologically | **ENGAGE** Globally | **LIVE** Biblically

Life of Julius Africanus

Julius Africanus was probably born in Jerusalem, many scholars think around a.d. 200. Africanus was considered by the ancients as a man of consummate learning and sharpest judgment (*Ante-Nicene Fathers* 6:128). He was a pupil of Heracles, distinguished for philosophy and other Greek learning, in Alexandria, Egypt around a.d. 231–233. In a.d. 220/226, he performed some duty in behalf of Nicopolis (formerly Emmaus) in Palestine. Later he likely became bishop of Emmaus (Eusebius, *History*, VI.xxxi.2). Origen calls him “a beloved brother in God the Father, through Jesus Christ, His holy Child” (*Letter from Origen to Africanus* 1). Fellow historian Eusebius distinguishes him as “no ordinary historian” (*History*, I. vi.2). Eusebius describes the five books of *Chronologies* as a “monument of labor and accuracy” and cites extensively from his harmony of the evangelists’ genealogies (*History*, VI. xxxi. 1–3). Africanus was a careful historian who sought to defend the truth of the Bible. He is an ancient example of meticulous, detailed scholarship which is historical, biblical, truthful, and devout.

Even though Eusebius describes Africanus as the author of the *Kestoi*, Jerome makes no mention of this (ANF 6:124). The author of *Kestoi* is surnamed Sextus, probably a Libyan philosopher who arranged a library in the Pantheon at Rome for the Emperor. The *Kestoi* was probably written toward the end of the 200s. It was not written by a Christian since it contains magical incantations (*Oxyrhynchus Papyri* III.412).

The Greek text of Africanus’ writings may be found in Martinus Josephus Routh, *Reliquiae sacrae* II (New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1974 [1846]), 225–309, and Martin Wallraff, Umberto Roberto, Karl Pinggéra, eds., William Adler, trans., *Iulius Africanus Chronographiae: The Extant Fragments*, *Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller* 15 (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007).

The extant writings of Julius Africanus may be found in vol. 1, no 1, April 2009 edition of the *Africanus Journal*.

Other Front Matter

Editorial team

Alvin Padilla, Nicole Rim, John Runyon, Aída Besançon Spencer, William David Spencer

Resources

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary faculty publications only and hard copies of this journal may be ordered by emailing cumebookstore@gordonconwell.edu, books@gordonconwell.edu, or telephoning CUME bookstore at 617-427-7293.

Please note that each author is solely legally responsible for the content and the accuracy of facts, citations, references, and quotations rendered and properly attributed in the article appearing under his or her name. Neither Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, the Africanus Guild, nor the editorial team is responsible or legally liable for any content or any statements made by any author, but the legal responsibility is solely that author’s once an article appears in print in the *Africanus Journal*.

Summary of Content

This issue examines the contemporary topics of ambient technology, the misuse of sexuality in discussing the image of God, the massacre of innocent children, and theories which challenge the resurrection and uniqueness of Jesus. The issue concludes with several book reviews.

Perpetually Connected?: The Effects and Implications of Ambient Technology on Christian Worshipers

Jared E. Alcántara and Jeffrey D. Arthurs

Introduction

“Bill, you’ve connected over a billion people,” Jerry Seinfeld says to Bill Gates in a Microsoft commercial in 2008. “I can’t help wondering what’s next. A frog with an email? A goldfish with a website? Amoeba with a blog?” After Gates intimates that Seinfeld’s predictions are not far afield, the T.V. screen goes blank minus a two-word slogan: “Perpetually Connected.”¹ Gates was right about at least one thing; people *are* becoming perpetually connected. In July 2010, Facebook welcomed its 500 millionth user despite having only 100 million users in 2008.² It averages five million new users per week.³ The average user spends 169 minutes per month on Facebook as compared to 13 minutes per month on Google News Reader’s website or 10 minutes per month on *The New York Times* website.⁴ In addition to the rise of social networking sites, the number of mobile phone users is expected to reach five billion worldwide by the end of 2010, a growth of 400 million in one year.⁵ A recent study suggests that 72 percent of mobile phone owners also send text messages, up 7 percent from last year.⁶ The meteoric rise of ambient technologies in recent years has been remarkable.

What are ambient technologies? They are social media that allow users to be in constant contact through blogging, social networking, emailing, “tweeting,” and mobile phone technology. For good reasons, churches have seen potential in these media to foster community and enhance evangelistic outreach. However, this article focuses on the risks users incur. It examines the adverse effects of immersion in these media on seeking Christian worshipers with the intent of providing homiletical strategies for critically engaging with these practices.

The Risks to Users of Ambient Technologies

The Listener as Fragmented Person

One of the strengths of immersion in ambient technology is that it can be a healthy avenue of self-expression and identity formation.⁷ Teenage users, especially, covet opportunities to communicate

1 As cited in William Powers, *Hamlet’s BlackBerry: A Practical Philosophy for Building a Good Life in the Digital Age* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010), 67.

2 Julianne Pepitone reports that approximately 70 percent of Facebook’s users are outside the United States. See Julianne Pepitone, “Facebook Hits 500 Million Users,” *CNN Money*, July 21, 2010, http://money.cnn.com/2010/07/21/technology/facebook_500_million/index.htm?postversion=2010072114&chpt=T2. In a recent review of David Kilpatrick’s *The Facebook Effect*, New York Times journalist Michiko Kakutani states, “Facebook is not only the world’s largest social network, but Mr. Kirkpatrick suggests that it may also ‘be the fastest-growing company of any type in history.’ He reports that over 20 percent of the 1.7 billion people on the global Internet now use Facebook regularly, including 35.3 percent of the American population. The number of users is growing at the remarkable rate of 5 percent a month, he says, and the average user, astonishingly enough, spends almost an hour there each day.” See Michiko Kakutani, “‘The Facebook Effect’ by David Kirkpatrick,” *The New York Times*, June 7, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/08/books/08book.html?ref=mark_e_zuckerberg.

3 Jessi Hempel, “How Facebook is Taking Over Our Lives,” *Fortune*, February 19, 2009, www.money.cnn.com.

4 Ibid.

5 Sarah Parkes, “ITU Sees 5 Billion Mobile Subscriptions Globally in 2010” (February 15, 2010), http://www.itu.int/newsroom/press_releases/2010/06.html.

6 “When Texting Becomes an Addiction,” *CBS News: CBS Early Show*, September 1, 2010, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2010/09/01/earlyshow/living/parenting/main6825771.shtml?tag=cbsnewsMainColumnArea>. For more on the dangers of texting, i.e., addiction and physical dangers, see this article and Matt Richtel, “In Study, Texting Lifts Crash Risk by Large Margin,” *The New York Times*, July 28, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/28/technology/28texting.html>.

7 In her chapter “Adolescence and Identity: Finding Yourself in the Machine,” MIT sociologist Sherry Turkle describes the positive effect that computer programming or virtual community can have on children in classroom environments.

with peers honestly and openly in forums outside parental control. On a mobile phone, they can call or text whenever *they* deem it appropriate. On Facebook, they can change web profiles, load photos, or update statuses, all of which allow them to “tinker” with their identities and be architects of self-presentation.⁸

Despite these apparent benefits, some researchers suggest that media immersion may result in identity fragmentation rather than formation, regardless of one’s age.⁹ Psychologist Kenneth J. Gergen calls this splitting of identity “multiphrenia,” or a state of dividing oneself into a “multiplicity of self-investments.”¹⁰ For example, Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg stated in a 2009 article in *Time* that his company hopes eventually to give its users “the ability to have a different Facebook personality for each Facebook friendship, a sort of online version of the line from Walt Whitman’s ‘Song of Myself’: ‘I contain multitudes.’”¹¹

Although the user is free to try on multiple selves online, this freedom can cloud rather than clarify identity. After all, the user is free to be anyone that he or she wants to be online. Splitting the self into constituent parts can deconstruct identity to such an extent that the user no longer conceives of the self as whole. As psychologist John C. Bechtold writes, “The self is deconstructed into a variety of contexts that are constantly changing.”¹² Instead of seeing a coherent reflection as in a mirror, one sees only fragments.

Psychologist Kent L. Norman also warns of identity fragmentation.¹³ When ambient technology substitutes for face-to-face interactions, Norman argues, a person’s uniqueness can get lost behind a medium that promotes distance, detachment, and disembodiment. When a person stands behind the machine, as it were, only an obstructed view remains. Norman writes:

The self is embodied in a very analog body and its complexity exceeds by many orders of magnitude any conceivable digital model of it...The self is not only more than the sum of the parts; it is more than itself. It includes its relationships with others and with God himself.¹⁴

Although technology can be a good tool for trying on different virtual selves, it does not define or delimit one’s identity. Media-saturated worshipers arrive at worship services with a thoroughly deconstructed concept of themselves, who they are and are called to be. They are “multiphrenetic.”

The Listener as Oversaturated Performer

Another strength of ambient technology is that it successfully collapses barriers of time and space. Children can talk to their grandparents on Bluetooth while riding in a mini-van. Business travelers can

Engagement with “the machine” can positively shape the way children conceive of themselves and think about the world. See Sherry Turkle, *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 131-152.

8 Sociologist Bob Wuthnow suggests that being a “tinkerer” or “bricoleur” is a defining characteristic of young adults in their twenties and thirties, especially as it pertains to religion. The tinkerer sifts through ideas and practices from a variety of places and constructs a unique bricolage in order to engage in identity construction. See Robert Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 13-16, 134-136.

9 The common misconception that Facebook and other social networking sites are only used by adolescents and those in early adulthood was debunked in a 2009 article in *Time* by Jessi Hempel. Hempel states that the 18 to 24 year-old market, i.e. college and post-college crowd, that Facebook originally targeted in its earliest stages, now makes up less than a quarter of its users. From 2008 to 2009, new Facebook accounts were up 175% among women 55 or older. See Jessi Hempel, “How Facebook is Taking Over Our Lives.”

10 Kenneth J. Gergen, *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1991), 73-74.

11 Jessi Hempel, “How Facebook is Taking Over Our Lives.”

12 John Bechtold, “Technology and the Self: Approaching the Transmodern,” in *The Self: Beyond the Postmodern Crisis*, eds. Paul C. Vitz and Susan M. Felch (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006), 194.

13 Kent L. Norman, “The Self at the Human/Computer Interface: A Postmodern Artifact in a Different World,” in *The Self: Beyond the Postmodern Crisis*, eds. Vitz and Felch.

14 *Ibid.*, 180.

video chat for free from almost anywhere in the world on Skype. Anyone with Twitter can “tweet” friends with instant updates about themselves or receive instant updates about others. *Prima facie*, these benefits are extraordinary.

Yet, there are also costs to “hyperconnection,” that is, a perceived notion of ubiquitous knowledge and presence.¹⁵ In a recent *NY Times* article, Matt Richtel suggests that many Americans are suffering from “information overload.”¹⁶ Recent research supports Richtel’s claim that overload leads to distraction, inattention, and loss of mental capacity.¹⁷ For example, a University of California study discovered that those who constantly checked email in the workplace reported significantly higher levels of stress than those who did not.¹⁸ The “hyperconnected” often complain of high levels of mental exhaustion as a result of constantly being “on” as a performer and participant.¹⁹ The article focuses on Kord Campbell, a man whose home office has three computer screens.²⁰ Campbell reports significant levels of forgetfulness that harm his business; he laments his inattention to his family. Although Campbell’s case is extreme, his lifestyle points to a broader trend, namely, the costs associated with failing to unplug.²¹ In a recent article on mobile phones, sociologist Sherry Turkle describes a person who is unable to unplug as a “tethered self.” Rather than technology being tethered to the person, the person becomes tethered to the technology.²²

15 The word “hyperconnected” is used as verbiage in various articles pertaining to Facebook and its founder Mark Zuckerberg. See Jesse Rice, *The Church of Facebook: How the Hyperconnected Are Redefining Community* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009). For another instance of using the word “hyperconnected,” see Nicholas A. Christakis and James H. Fowler, *Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives* (New York: Little, Brown, and Co., 2009), 253-286. To describe the same phenomenon, John Bechtold uses the word “hyperpresence,” or “an exaggerated sense that we have been in at least two places at once.” See Bechtold, “Technology and the Self,” 189. In a recent book chapter, Kenneth J. Gergen describes the social media “hyperconnection” phenomenon as “absent presence.” Summarizing the negative effects, Gergen writes, “The erosion of face-to-face community, a coherent and centered sense of self, moral bearings, depth of relationship, and the uprooting of meaning from material context: such are the repercussions of absent presence.” See Kenneth J. Gergen, “The Challenge of Absent Presence,” in *Perpetual Contact: Mobile Communication, Private Talk, Public Performance*, eds. James E. Katz and Mark A. Aakhus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 232, 236.

16 Matt Richtel, “Hooked on Gadgets, and Paying a Mental Price,” *New York Times* (New York, NY, June 6, 2010), <http://www.nytimes.com>. The term “information overload” was originally coined by Alvin Toffler back in the 1970’s as a futurist warning about what could happen to human beings if they adopted connective technologies. The term has gained broader currency in the last two decades in discussions about psychological disorders, attention deficit traits, and productivity problems associated with processing vast amounts of digital information. See Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York: Bantam Books, 1984). See also the reference to Toffler’s work in Powers, *Hamlet’s BlackBerry*, 50.

17 Nicholas G. Carr, *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*, 1st ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), 115-143.

18 Richtel, “Hooked on Gadgets, and Paying a Mental Price.” Powers observes that several studies have found that those who suffer most from information overload in the workplace, ironically, are employed in technology fields. Powers writes, “In studies of workplace overload, the most shocking statistics and anecdotes—employees so distracted, they can barely think—come from the technology sector.” See Powers, *Hamlet’s BlackBerry*, 68.

19 For more on the challenges of being constantly “on” as a performer as it pertains to mobile phone technology, see Sherry Turkle, “Always-on/Always-on-You: The Tethered Self,” in *Handbook of Mobile Communication Studies*, ed. James E. Katz (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 121-137. Reflecting on the challenges faced by the upcoming generation as it pertains to social networking sites, computer scientist Jaron Lanier writes, “They must manage their online reputations constantly, avoiding the ever-roaming evil eye of the hive mind, which can turn on an individual at any moment. A ‘Facebook generation’ young person who suddenly becomes humiliated online has no way out, for there is only one hive.” See Jaron Lanier, *You Are Not a Gadget: A Manifesto* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 70.

20 Richtel describes the situation of the three screens as follows: “The left screen follows 1,100 of his friends on Twitter, the middle screen is used for computer programming along with video and IM chats pertaining to his business, and the third screen is for email, a calendar, a Web browser, and music.” Richtel, “Hooked on Gadgets, and Paying a Mental Price.”

21 Richtel points out in a 2009 article that, according to a study in which the cabs of long-haul trucks were equipped with video cameras over an 18 month period, truck drivers who texted while driving had a collision risk that was 23 times greater than when not texting. See Richtel, “In Study, Texting Lifts Crash Risk by Large Margin.” When Jared was driving on a major highway with his wife and two young children recently, they spotted a woman driving behind them erratically. She was steering the car with her knees while texting on her mobile phone.

22 Turkle, “Always-on/Always-on-You: The Tethered Self.”

Hyperconnection can lead to exhaustion for other reasons as well. For instance, one can no longer unplug while on vacation. There is no space for resting, because there is no place for unplugging. Work can follow those who are “hyper-present” wherever they go.²³ Another issue is the absence of filters that separate the newsworthy from the mundane. Although social media is often used effectively as a tool for political or non-profit mobilization, it is also used to tell hundreds of “friends” that a person ate a Subway sandwich for lunch or that flip flops are on sale at Old Navy.²⁴ As Bechtold comments, “Information can seem evanescent and detached from any history or narrative.”²⁵ Predicting the connection between technology and mundane newscasting in his book *Walden*, Thoreau suggested back in 1845, while referring to the trans-atlantic cable, “We are in a great haste to tunnel under the Atlantic to bring the old world some weeks nearer the new. But perchance the first news that may leak into the broad, flapping American ear is that Princess Adelaide has the whooping cough.”²⁶ When everything is news, nothing is.

To media-saturated worshipers, exhausted by information overload, stillness and silence are anathema. The Lord’s command in Psalm 46:10, “*Be still* and know that I am God,” is neither heeded nor practiced, a theme we will return to later in this article.

The Listener as (Dis)Connected from Community

Another perceived strength of ambient technology is that it can enhance community. In *The Church of Facebook*, worship leader Jesse Rice observes that social networking sites feel like “home” in a society where people feel displaced and homeless.²⁷ Like physical homes in past generations, Facebook can be a place where the “homeless” keep cherished possessions (e.g., pictures, video, correspondence), find a sense of family, and feel secure. Not only does one feel at “home,” but one also feels closer to others despite time and space barriers. One can connect with a friend, re-connect with an old flame, or feel close to a family member by scanning their “page,” albeit virtually.

Although ambient technology enhances community in some ways, it also fosters disconnection.²⁸ In a *Time Magazine* article, Belinda Luscombe claims that, in an age of “perpetual digital connectedness,” human beings are more disconnected than ever.²⁹ She cites a Duke University study that notes a three-fold increase (up to 25 percent) from 1985 to 2004 in those who claim that there is *no one* with whom they can discuss important matters. Arguing for causality, not simply correlation, she notes the precipitous drop in empathy among the millennial generation, linking it with Internet technology, particularly social media:

It’s possible that instead of fostering real friendships off-line, email and social networking may take the place of them – and the distance inherent in screen-only interactions may breed feelings of isolation or a tendency to care less about other

23 Bechtold uses the language of “hyperpresence” in Bechtold, “Technology and the Self: Approaching the Transmodern,” 189.

24 Christopher Chabris writes, “The near-continuous stream of new information pumped out by the Web also plays to our natural tendency to ‘vastly overvalue what happens to us *right now*.’” Cited in Carr, *The Shallows*, 134.

25 Bechtold, “Technology and the Self: Approaching the Transmodern,” 197.

26 Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, as cited in Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin, 1985), 65.

27 For more on the development of homelessness in the American consciousness, see Peter L. Berger, Brigitte Berger, and Hansfried Kellner, *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness* (New York, NY: Random House, 1973). For Rice’s connections between Facebook and our sense of “home,” see Rice, *The Church of Facebook*, 76ff.

28 Psychologist John Bechtold argues that overloaded email or voicemail boxes alienate users from engaging in meaningful relationships. Anyone who has returned from vacation and dreaded checking email or voicemail can understand this anxiety. Are we more or less likely to avoid a person to whom we owe an email or phone call on a work-related matter, especially if we’ve been away? “In an ironic reversal,” Bechtold argues, “you become the source of information that some technology is trying to access.” See Bechtold, “Technology and the Self: Approaching the Transmodern,” 197.

29 Belinda Luscombe, “Why Email May Be Hurting Off-Line Relationships,” *Time*, June 22, 2010, <http://www.time.com>.

people. After all, if you don't feel like dealing with a friend's problem online, all you have to do is log off.³⁰

Although suggesting that social media is the lone culprit behind disconnectedness would be reductionistic, Luscombe's insights are still important. Online community may *seem* more intimate than face-to-face friendships, but it is not.³¹ Putting on a "virtual self" may satisfy a thirst for community in some ways, but it is just as likely to leave this desire unsatiated.³² Disconnectedness is often broadened rather than bridged. One may have five hundred "friends" on Facebook, an iPhone, and "tweet" constantly, but still be the loneliest person in the room at a worship service. Being perpetually connected is not the same as being in Christian fellowship. Virtual community cannot replace true *koinonia*.

The Listener as Idolater

In 1964, media expert Marshall McLuhan made two keen observations about the link between technology and idolatry by drawing on wisdom from the ancient world. His first source was the Narcissus myth in which the protagonist mistakes his own reflection in the water for another person. This reflection is so entrancing that he becomes "numb" to the biddings of the nymph Echo. The point of the myth is not that Narcissus fell in love with himself, but that he became enamored with a reflection, or an "extension" of himself. McLuhan argues that the "gadget lover," consumed by technology, can fall into a similar trap. Technology is an extension of human capacities. As an extension, it leaves the user "numb" to its presence and effects.³³ Although the "gadget" is only a "reflection," one can just as easily become enamored with it.

The source for McLuhan's second insight is surprising: Psalm 115. Speaking of the danger of worshiping idols, the psalmist states: "But their idols are silver and gold, made by human hands... Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them" (NIV). "By continuously embracing technologies," he writes, "we relate ourselves to them as servomechanisms. That is why we must, to use them at all, *serve these objects*, these extensions of ourselves, as gods or minor religions."³⁴ Although McLuhan's provocative thesis that using technology inevitably leads to idolatry is probably too hyperbolic, he is not the only person who shares this concern. In *Moths to the Flame*, Gregory J.E. Rawlins writes, "Once we start using a tool extensively, it also starts using us.... Ultimately, it may change how we view reality itself."³⁵ Kent L. Norman suggests the illusion of "quasi niscience, quasi nipotence, and quasi presence" (all of which mimic the attributes of God)

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Christine Rosen makes a helpful distinction between virtual and real-world friendship when she writes, "Friendship in these virtual spaces is thoroughly different from real-world friendship. In its traditional sense, friendship is a relationship which broadly speaking, involves the sharing of mutual interests, reciprocity, trust, and the revelation of intimate details over time and within specific social (and cultural) contexts. Because friendship depends on mutual revelations that are concealed from the rest of the world, it can only flourish within the boundaries of privacy; the idea of public friendship is an oxymoron." See Christine Rosen, "Virtual Friendship and the New Narcissism," *The New Atlantis*, Summer 2007, 15-31; Rice, *The Church of Facebook*, 113.

³² Sociologist Ben Agger defines the "virtual self" as "the person connected to the world and to others through electronic means such as the Internet, television, and cell phones. Virtuality is the state of being online and using computers: it is a state of being." See Ben Agger, *The Virtual Self: A Contemporary Sociology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 155.

³³ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 41-42. Powers adds further credibility to McLuhan's claim that technology leads to numbness when he writes, "The hours we spend flitting constantly among tasks train us to treat our time and our attention as infinitely divisible commodities. . . . Eventually the mind falls into a mode of thinking, a kind of nervous rhythm that's inherently about finding new stimuli, new jobs to perform. This carries over into the rest of our lives; even when we're away from screens, it's hard for our minds to stop clicking around and come to rest." Powers, *Hamlet's BlackBerry*, 46-47.

³⁴ McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, 46. Emphasis added.

³⁵ Gregory J.E. Rawlins, *Moths to the Flame: The Seductions of Computer Technology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 24.

can distort one's sense of reality.³⁶ "While computers cannot make us gods," Norman warns, "they seem to move us in that direction."³⁷ Whether it is structuring one's life around the tool as Rawlins asserts, or succumbing to the false illusion of ubiquitous knowledge as Norman argues, the user becomes subservient to the mechanism in the case of the former and stands in the place of God in the case of the latter. As the psalmist puts it when referring to idols, "Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them."

These concerns are not raised by Luddites seeking to impede technological progress, but media specialists thinking critically about ambient technology's effects upon society. They are trying to define "progress" in ways beyond simple efficiency and control. They want humanity to progress in wisdom as well as speed of information transfer. They want machines to remain machines, for people to use them wisely and judiciously.

Ambient technology is not sinful nor will it ever be. However, like money or possessions, it becomes idolatrous when those who should be following the Lord Jesus, worship "what their hands have made." When worshipers become enamored with ambient technology, falling in love with their reflection, as Narcissus once did, sadly, their misplaced affections become idolatrous. In his book on idolatry, G.K. Beale writes, "What people revere, they resemble, either for ruin or restoration."³⁸ Ambient technology can be quite good, but when revered and left unchecked, it can lead to ruination. As Beale puts it, "We become what we worship."

Homiletical and Liturgical Response to Ambient Technology: Preaching as Reminding, Worship as Remembering

Having described the potential risks that media-saturated listeners face, such as fragmentation, information overload, disconnection from true community, and potential idolatry, we turn now to the response worship leaders, including preachers, can make. But two caveats are in order: first, not all effects of ambient technology are negative. This paper focuses on the negative because we see many churches and individuals adopting technologies uncritically, basing decisions on fashion trends without thoughtful theological reflection. And, second, there are no quick fixes. Seventy-five minutes in corporate worship each week cannot undo all negative effects of technological addiction, but those precious minutes can do *some* things.

We suggest two responses to pervasive ambient technology: preachers and worship leaders should (1) help our people remember and (2) leverage incarnational communication. These responses can help us resist technology's displacing of the mind, which is "calm, focused, [and] undistracted," with the "new kind of mind that wants and needs to take in and dole out information in short, disjointed, often overlapping bursts—the faster the better."³⁹

One of the purposes of preaching, neglected in most homiletics textbooks, is simply to remind believers of what they already know. From the covenant renewal ceremonies under Moses, Joshua, Josiah, and Ezra, to our Lord's instituting of the new covenant with the words "Remember me," to Jude's burden that, although his readers already knew all that he would tell them, he thought it necessary to *remind* them to persevere in the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3, 5), preachers and liturgists have always helped people remember. Worshipers immersed in ambient technologies that fragment their sense of self and reality need to be "re-membered"; that is, they need to be put back together.

When preachers "merely" remind believers of their identity in Christ that the covenant God has initiated, and the stipulations he requires, we may feel that our message is simplistic and

³⁶ Norman, "The Self at the Human/Computer Interface: A Postmodern Artifact in a Different World," 173.

³⁷ Ibid., 179.

³⁸ G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 16.

³⁹ Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains* (New York: Norton, 2010), 10.

redundant, but this is usually not how listeners react to such messages. Rather, we are like the hobbits who “liked to have books filled with things that they already knew, set out fair and square with no contradictions.”⁴⁰ The power of rehearsing well known stories, truths, and values has been explored by Perlman and Olbrechts-Tyteca under the heading of “epideictic oratory.” They state that epideictic activity “strengthens the disposition toward action by increasing adherence to the values it lauds.”⁴¹ For the listeners, these values may be “undisputed,” but they are also “not formulated.”⁴² That is, listeners agree, but they may not be able to articulate why they agree, or they may not understand the implications of the value to their lives. Perhaps the homiletical strategy of reminding accounts for much of the effectiveness of Timothy Keller’s preaching, whereby he shows his listeners, saved and unsaved alike, how the gospel meets the deepest needs of the human heart. His listeners, fragmented Humpty Dumpty’s falling off of Wall Street and Madison Avenue, must be put together again.

Ambient technologies create minds which want to be “distracted from distraction by distraction.”⁴³ These minds are dominated by *curiositas*,

Which the medieval moral theologians considered distinctly a vice. It was often described as the besetting temptation of the pilgrim, losing his focus on the goal of the journey by gawking at all the novelties along the way, lapsing into the titillated but uninvolved gaze of the tourist. *Curiositas* is a desire for the sort of aimless knowledge that comes with no moral strings attached, no responsibility for caring for the person seen.⁴⁴

How can preachers and worship leaders remind their people so that they will be re-membered? Space permits only an outline of suggestions:

Extended and Effective Public Reading of Scripture

Believers need to hear regularly about the covenant God has initiated and the response he requires. Evangelicals depend primarily on the sermon to do this, and obviously it deserves to be a major player in that enterprise, but we also need to hear directly from God himself through the Word, with only minimal commentary, just voice to ear. Through patient, regular, thorough, skillful public reading, fragmented readers can be reminded of who they are: a chosen people, a royal priesthood. Just as storytelling at the dinner table helps form the identity of a family, so does public reading of Scripture form the identity of the worshipping community. But note: the reading must be done *skillfully*. Lackadaisical, unprepared, monotoned Scripture reading accomplishes little. It must embody the gravity and delight of being part of God’s family.

Narrative Arc

The form of a sermon, sermon series, worship service, or even the form of the liturgical year, can help connect fragmented worshipers to the metanarrative of the Christian faith. The narrative arc is, of course, the creation, fall, redemption, and final deliverance of God’s creatures and creation. It recounts God’s unfolding redemptive plan and situates the listener within that plan.

This narrative arc should include more than the hegemonic mood of most evangelical worship services—celebration and thanksgiving. It must also include lament, introspection, and confession. As Shane Hipps states:

Electronic media culture has a natural bias toward efficiency, entertainment, and consumption. . . . Taking its cues from these biases, worship in the modern church

40 J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (New York: Ballantine, 1954), 9.

41 Ch. Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*, trans. Wilkinson and Weaver (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1969), 50.

42 Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, 53.

43 T. S. Eliot, *Four Quarters*, Book 1, “Burnt Norton,” III. l 101. <http://www.tristan.icom43.net/quartets/norton.html>

44 John Skillen, “Facebook in a Monastery,” *Stillpoint* (Fall, 2010): 16.

is often equated almost exclusively with joy and celebration. Worship often serves as a kind of pep rally designed to inspire thanksgiving for what God has done and excitement about who God is. While this is certainly a legitimate aspect of worship, it is incomplete.⁴⁵

Emphasizing only celebration “cuts to the heart of hospitality and pastoral sensitivity.”⁴⁶ That is, many people who gather for worship need to travel the road of the psalms of lament: from pain, doubt, and wrestling with God, to re-affirmation of faith, to joy. To feed worshipers only one meal flavored with the same spices as does most media—fast and enjoyable—is to teach them to deny their emotions, feel shame for their doubts, and alienate them from the community. It perpetuates numbness rather than abrogating it.

Incidentally, the narrative arc of creation through consummation is being used more and more for evangelism, not just for worship. Oral cultures seem to respond especially well to this integrated and concrete approach to theology, and perhaps literate but fragmented Internet surfers will also respond. The use of the narrative arc may help account for the effectiveness of Rob Bell’s teaching. His approach to hermeneutics and homiletics is consciously narrational.

Ritual

As preachers and liturgists take it upon themselves to remind worshipers of the covenant, they should use non-verbal communication (ritual). Concrete forms of communication such as hands laid on, bread eaten, knees bent, and water splashed over one are crucial in re-membering distracted souls. While our people may subscribe to *digital maximalism* (William Power’s term for the values of being hyper-connected and distracted)⁴⁷ and thus chafe at the use of “media” like silence, the slow passing of seasons, and physicality, worship leaders will nonetheless take their cue from Scripture, where such activities are assumed, modeled, and even commanded. As Quentin J. Schultze states, to persons saturated in technologies that privilege efficiency and control (such as email, texting, and social media), “silence strikes us as an error, a missed cue. We look immediately for an alternative diversion. Stillness seems useless,”⁴⁸ but it is not useless. The worship service may be one of the few occasions where splintered souls can be calmed and re-membered. Pastors should patiently tutor “the digital consciousness [which] can’t tolerate three minutes of pure focus.”⁴⁹ William Powers continues:

The hours we spend flitting constantly among tasks train us to treat our time and our attention as infinitely divisible commodities. . . . Eventually the mind falls into a mode of thinking, a kind of nervous rhythm that’s inherently about finding new stimuli, new jobs to perform. This carries over into the rest of our lives; even when we’re away from screens, it’s hard for our minds to stop clicking around and come to rest.⁵⁰

Effective preachers and worship leaders who minister to folks whose minds constantly click around can help them rest by reminding them of the faith once delivered to the saints.

Incarnation

While ambient technology offers users a sense of nearly ubiquitous presence, we would do well

45 Shane Hipps, *The Hidden Power of Electronic Culture: How Media Shapes Faith, the Gospel, and Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 160.

46 Hipps, *The Hidden Power of Electronic Culture*, 161.

47 Powers, *Hamlet’s Blackberry*, 4.

48 Quentin J. Schultze, *High Tech Worship: Using Presentational Technologies Wisely* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 84.

49 Powers, *Hamlet’s Blackberry*, 46.

50 Powers, *Hamlet’s Blackberry*, 46-47.

to consider the maxim of Seneca: “To be everywhere is to be nowhere.”⁵¹ As stated above, ambient technologies have a bias toward efficiency and control, not patience and humility. Users of these technologies tend to equate transmission with communication.⁵² So-called “communication” is reduced to the sending of brief, frenetic messages, broadcasting of opinions and trivial activities (“I had a cheeseburger for lunch, and boy was it good!”). “Conversation” partners become an “invisible entourage” that follow the sender everywhere he/she goes.⁵³ As Rice states concerning Facebook: “Hyperconnection . . . changes the nature of our relationships by turning our friends into audiences and us into performers.”⁵⁴ Buffardi and Campbell also warn of narcissism:

These online communities may be an especially fertile ground for narcissists . . . for two reasons. First, narcissists function well in the context of shallow . . . relationships. Social networking Web sites are built on the base of superficial “friendships” with many individuals and “sound-byte” driven communication between friends (i.e., *wallposts*). Certainly, individuals use social networking sites to maintain deeper relationships as well, but often the real draw is the ability to maintain large numbers of relationships (e.g., many users have hundreds or even thousands of “friends”). Second, social networking Web pages are highly controlled environments (Vazire & Gosling, 2004). Owners have complete power over self-presentation on Web pages, unlike most other social contexts. In particular, one can use personal Web pages to select attractive photographs of oneself or write self-descriptions that are self-promoting.⁵⁵

Two liturgical responses can help foster communion in worship services and counter ambient technology’s natural biases toward narcissistic autonomy.

Listening/Dialogue

Worship services should be marked by a community of disciples sitting at Jesus’ feet. Jesus is present, of course, through his Word, in the Lord’s Supper, and in the body of Christ, the priesthood of all believers. We “access” the Lord by listening, but listening demands that we cease from constant speaking and mental scurrying. Sadly, the Internet fosters both. As a counter-cultural community, the Church should model humble listening.

Advice on heightening listening/dialogue in preaching and worship can be found in many books and articles and does not need to be repeated here. The advice includes preparing sermons in community; creating venues for two-way communication before, during, and after the sermon; adapting Asian modes of teaching for Western contexts; and borrowing African American rhetorical devices for non-African American contexts. However it is done, the goal is to help “constant performers” step out of self-generated spotlights in order to listen humbly to the voice of God in the voice of the community.

Testimony

To combat the negative effects of mediated communication, where we script, edit, stage manage, and air brush facsimiles of ourselves, we suggest testimony. This form of communication can be operationalized in many ways. It can accompany the sermon, as in Rick Warren’s practice; the preacher can incarnate the truth with appropriate self-disclosure;⁵⁶ or entire services can be given to testimony. However it is done, we feel that incarnation is indispensable, not ancillary, to Christian communication, and that testimony allows the truth to be incarnated. Because of

51 In Carr, *The Shallows*, 141.

52 Schultze, *High Tech Worship*, 21.

53 Rice, *Church of Facebook*, 111.

54 Rice, *Church of Facebook*, 112.

55 Laura E. Buffardi and W. Keith Campbell, “Narcissism and Social Networking Web Sites,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 34/10 (2008): 1305.

56 See Jeffrey Arthurs and Andrew Gurevich, “Theological and Rhetorical Perspectives on Self-Disclosure in Preaching,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 157 (April-June 2000): 215-226.

this conviction, the authors of this article are concerned about the growing practice of multi-site churches with video sermons. Ambient technology can approximate presence, as with the technology of epistles, but it is only presence-in-absence.

Conclusion

“This time, like all times, is a very good one, if we but know what to do with it.”⁵⁷ We have suggested that worship leaders, including preachers, resist the fragmenting and narcissistic effects of ambient technology by reminding worshipers of the truth and by incarnating that truth. Intending this article to spark conversation, rather than provide the final word on the quickly evolving world of communication technology, we invite dialogue.

Jared E. Alcántara is a doctoral student at Princeton Theological Seminary and graduate of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Jeffrey D. Arthurs is professor of preaching and communication, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

⁵⁷ Ralph Waldo Emerson, in Powers, *Hamlet's Blackberry*, vii.

Preparing Urban Scholar Practitioners

THEO WILLIAMS

Theo Williams grew up playing basketball, dreaming he'd play professionally someday. But as Theo entered college, God used a series of injuries to change his priorities. He began to coach, using basketball to reach inner city youth for Jesus Christ.

Theo enrolled in the Center for Urban Ministerial Education (CUME), the Boston campus of Gordon-Conwell. While at CUME, Theo co-founded and served as president of Antioch, Inc., a nonprofit committed to reconciliation, assisted in the planting of a church and honed his poetry skills. Upon graduating in 2004 with a Master of Arts in Urban Ministry, Theo and his wife Nicole spent a year in Jamaica mentoring youth through sports and music.

Theo currently works at Bethel College in Mishawaka, Indiana, as Associate Professor of Communication, as well as the Faculty Coordinator for the Center for Intercultural Development.

Whether teaching speech, conducting multicultural youth ministry, recording a spoken-word album, or starting a new church, Theo is integrating what he learned in the classroom and through his experiences at CUME.



"I began to see how basketball could be a part of lifelong ministry, and I realized I needed further preparation to give me a theological foundation as well as a hands-on training. Above all, I wanted a seminary committed to inner-city ministry."

—Theo Williams

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

CENTER FOR URBAN MINISTERIAL EDUCATION

The Boston Campus of
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
90 Warren Street, Boston, MA 02119

www.gordonconwell.edu/boston
phone: 617-427-7293

Master of Arts in Urban Ministry • Master of Arts in Youth Ministry • Master of Arts in Educational Ministry • Master of Arts in Counseling • Master of Divinity • Master of Theology (Th.M.)

Gordon-Conwell
Theological Seminary



SOUTH HAMILTON | CHARLOTTE | BOSTON | JACKSONVILLE

THINK Theologically | **ENGAGE** Globally | **LIVE** Biblically

Sexuality and the Image of God: Dangers in Evangelical and Roman Catholic Theologies of the Body¹

Megan K. DeFranza

Sexuality is everywhere we look. Walking through the mall or flipping through the few channels we have on our basic cable might make one think that this is just the way things are. Sexuality affects everything: our relationships, our shampoo choices, the clothes we wear, the cars we drive, the food we eat or choose not to eat. Sexuality governs everything we do. Or so we are told.

Sigmund Freud insisted that sexual desire is the primary force driving all human activities. Karl Jung, another influential psychologist (with views that have been incorporated by many a theologian) defined sexual energy, or libido, as a creative energy which enables a person to become a true self, a process he believed includes encounter with the divine. Of course, this is what we have come to expect from the secular media or from “left-wing” academics. Things are different in the evangelical world, right? Not necessarily.

A number of evangelical and conservative Catholic theologians have come to view sexuality as central to what it means to be human. They agree with Freud and Jung that sexuality is what drives all human activities, even our pursuit of God, and argue that eros is appropriate language to use for Christian spirituality. These authors are certainly responding to a genuine need for a better presentation of Christian perspectives on sexuality. They are trying to correct and compensate for the Church’s largely negative picture of sex handed down from previous generations, but I will argue in what follows that they are swinging the pendulum too far. Their perspectives on sexuality and the image of God are introducing hidden dangers in need of correction.

Sexuality and the Image of God

What is the connection between sexuality and the image of God? Beginning with the creation account in Genesis chapter 1, we see that God creates humans in God’s image. They are created “male and female” (Gen. 1:27), and the very first thing God says to them is, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen. 1:28).²

For centuries theologians have connected the image of God with “subduing” or “ruling” the earth—what has come to be called the *functional view* of the *imago Dei*.³ Much less often have theologians considered “filling the earth” or “being fruitful” as part of the image of God, and even less often have they considered being created “male” or “female” part of the image,⁴ although a number of theologians did believe that males more closely imaged God, because they believed males

1 This is a slightly modified version of a paper originally presented at the Annual Conference of the Evangelical Theological Society, November 18, 2010, Atlanta, GA, and an expanded presentation of an essay originally published as “Is Sexuality Central to our Humanity” at All Saints Center for Theology, http://www.allsaintscenterfortheology.org/site/Social_Sexuality.html (Spring 2010).

2 NIV.

3 Others sought to get behind function to the substance. Human rationality was viewed as that which made ruling possible, and reason was believed to be located in the soul. Because the soul was believed to be made out of the same substance as the divine, this came to be known as the *substantive view* or *structural view* of the *imago Dei*. Gregory A. Boyd and Paul R. Eddy, *Across the Spectrum: Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 76. The substance or structure of the soul was also believed to be the seat of other human capacities such as the ability to love or pursue virtue or holiness – other attributes associated with the image of God by different theologians in history. Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 168.

4 Some theologians have included procreation under the functional view of the *imago*—procreation as analogous to divine creation of the universe. Grenz cites Henri Blocher and Meredith Kline as representatives of this view in *Theology for the Community of God*, 175.

to be more rational and therefore more natural, or rightful, rulers.⁵ Nevertheless, most theologians have separated the image of God from being male or female or from human sexuality and procreation, because they believe the testimony of John, who insisted, “God is spirit” (John 4:24). God does not have a body. Even when God did take on a body in the person of Jesus Christ, God did not engage in sexual activity by marrying or physically fathering children.

But theologians are beginning to overcome historical aversions and mistrust of sex, gender, and sexuality. They are asking: What is the theological significance of sex, gender, and sexuality? Instead of viewing sex and sexuality as ways that humans mirror the animals, or associating sexuality with concupiscence as the primary illustration of sinful, disordered, and inordinate desires, Christians are now asking: What good has God placed within the human body through biological sex differentiation, culturally-influenced gender identity/behavior, and sexual desire/activity? In their attempts to answer these questions, theologians are returning to the image of God.

Although he was not the first, Karl Barth (1886-1968) is often credited with challenging the traditional interpretations of *the imago Dei*.⁶ Rather than understanding the image as our ability to reason, or our responsibility to rule over creation, Barth looked to the creation of Adam and Eve together as an icon, an image of the Trinity. In Genesis 1:27-28, God said, “Let us make humankind in our image,”⁷ and then what does God make? Not one but two, a man and a woman, who are to “become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). Just as God is a plurality in a unity, three in one, so humankind, created in God’s image, is two who are called to be one. This view has come to be labeled the *relational* or *social view* of the *imago Dei*.⁸

Many theologians (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Anglican, and Eastern Orthodox) have come to agree. They argue that just as God does not exist alone, but in relationships—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—so humans are not created as solitary beings. We too are made up of the relationships we have. Whether we like it or not, whether we realize it or not, we cannot come-to-be as human, as selves, apart from our relations with others.

The social view of the image of God is not eclipsing functional or structural interpretations; rather, it is being presented as a complementary position contributing to a more well-rounded presentation of humanity as made in the divine image. At the same time, it is the social view to which theologians are turning as they wrestle with the theological significance of sex, gender, and sexuality.⁹

5 Frederick G. McLeod, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), chapter 6, “Are Women Images of God?”

6 Barth pulled together the contributions of Martin Buber, Wilhelm Vischer, Deitrich Bonhoeffer, Emil Brunner, Charlotte von Kirschbaum, and Fredrich Schleiermacher to argue that the way in which humans image God is in their existence as relational beings. Barth wrote, “Could anything be more obvious than to conclude from this clear indication that the image and likeness of being created by God signifies existence in confrontation, i.e., in this confrontation, in the juxtaposition and conjunction of man which is that of male and female...?” Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/1, trans. J. W. Edwards, O. Bussey, and Harold Knight, eds. G. W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1958), 195. Cited in Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 271. Cf. F. LeRon Shults, *Reforming Theological Anthropology: After the Philosophical Turn to Relationality* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 124. Rosemary Radford Ruether, “*Imago Dei*, Christian Tradition and Feminist Hermeneutics,” in *Image of God and Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, ed. Kari Elisabeth Børresen (Oslo: Solum Forlag, 1991). Suzanne Selinger, *Charlotte von Kirschbaum and Karl Barth: A Study in Biography and the History of Theology* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998). Janet Martin Soskice, *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 50.

7 NRSV.

8 This position appears under various names: relational, communal, social, etc. Stanley Grenz speaks of the “social God” and “relational self” in his theological anthropology by the same title while in his systematic theology text he discusses the social or relational view under the heading “The Divine Image as Special Community,” in *Theology for the Community of God*, 178. I find using the term social for both Trinity and *imago Dei* clarifies the connection. Other reasons for my choice of “social” over “relational” will appear in the course of my argument.

9 Grenz presents the social view as one interpretation among many in *Theology for the Community of God*, 177-

Evangelicals on Sexuality and the Image of God

Within Evangelicalism, Stanley Grenz may be the most influential theologian to have taken up this position. But the difference between Grenz and Barth is that Grenz argues that it is not simply relationships that make us human but sexual relations.¹⁰ God did not simply make two humans to be in relationship, but a male and female to be in sexual relationship. Rather than seeing the sexual dimension of the relationship of Adam and Eve as a feature of their marital relationship, Grenz sees even more significance in sexuality than that which draws humans into marriage. In his theological anthropology text, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, he explains his reading of Genesis along these lines. He writes:

Adam's cry of delight as the presence of the woman rescues him from his debilitating solitude, ... suggests, however, an even deeper aspect of human sexuality [by which he means deeper than procreation].¹¹ The narrative indicates that individual existence as an embodied creature entails a fundamental incompleteness or, stated positively, an innate yearning for completeness. This sensed incompleteness is symbolized by biological sex—that is, by existence as a particular person who is male or female. The incompleteness is related to existence as a sexual creature and therefore to human sexuality. Sexuality, in turn, is linked not only to incompleteness each person senses as an embodied, sexual creature but also to the potential for wholeness in relationship to others that parallels this fundamental incompleteness. ...Hence, sexuality is the dynamic that forms the basis of the uniquely human drive toward bonding.¹²

Two pages later, he summarizes his position, saying:

The ultimate goal of sexuality, and hence of the impulse toward bonding, is participation in the fullness of community—namely, life together as the new humanity, as the eschatological people in relationship with God and all creation.

Viewed in this light, sexuality, understood as the sense of incompleteness and the corresponding drive for wholeness, forms the dynamic that not only seeks human relationships but also motivates the quest for God.¹³

Notice what he says here. It is sexuality that illustrates or symbolizes our “sense of incompleteness and corresponding drive for wholeness.” It is sexuality that leads us out of isolation into community. It is the sense of sexual incompleteness that motivates the quest for God.

Rather than regarding the sexual relation as the first, fruitful foundation for other kinds of relations, sexuality is defined as relationality. Grenz writes, “[S]exuality is the drive toward bonding in all its forms, even in the bonding that characterizes singleness”—in other words, bonding in the

180. In *The Social God and the Relational Self*, his connection between male and female and the *imago* is found in Part III, entitled, “The Application: The Social *imago* and the Postmodern (Loss of) Self.”

10 Grenz feared that Barth's proposal discounted human embodiment, sex differentiation, gender, and sexuality. A disembodied, de-gendered I-Thou, was not enough to substantiate the significance of sex differentiation in human creation: “When he [Barth] exchanges the dynamic of sexuality, understood as the sense of incompleteness that gives rise to the drive toward bonding, for the paradigm of I-Thou relationality. In spite of his concern to draw deeply from the creation of humankind as male and female, in the end Barth leaves human sexuality behind.” Stanley J. Grenz, “The Social God and the Relational Self: Toward a Trinitarian Theology of the *Imago Dei*,” in *Trinitarian Soundings in Systematic Theology*, Paul Louis Metzger, ed. (London and New York: T & T Clark International, 2005), 95. See also Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 300-301.

11 He states in a previous paragraph: “The account of the creation of man from the earth and the subsequent fashioning of the woman from the man indicates that sexuality cannot be limited to the roles of male and female in reproduction. Rather it goes to the core of human personhood. ... Sexuality, therefore, includes the various dimensions of being in the world and relating to it as persons embodied as male or female, together with the various internalized understandings of the meaning of maleness and femaleness.” Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 277.

12 *Ibid.*, 277-278.

13 *Ibid.*, 280.

church community and in close friendships.¹⁴ Elsewhere in his *Sexual Ethics*, he writes:

The drive toward bonding... is always based on our existence as sexual beings—on our fundamental incompleteness, our inner restlessness, our desire for love and intimacy.¹⁵

Rather than defining incompleteness as a fundamental component of finite creatures, Grenz's language suggests that finitude is now to be understood under the rubric of sexuality. Sexual incompleteness is symbolic of any incompleteness. Sexual need, rather than illustrating one of the many, varied ways in which humans need others, becomes the paradigm for all need, even our need for God. Thus, the fulfillment of that need—the love of friends, neighbors, spouse, children, community, church, and God—are all viewed through the lens of the sexual.¹⁶

Lest we think that this is simply one influential evangelical who has imbibed too much of the spirit of the age, let us turn now to the words of the late Pope John Paul II, whose *Theology of the Body* is one of the legacies which the current Pope, Benedict XVI, has promised to preserve and develop.

Roman Catholics on Sexuality and the Image of God

In his "Theology of the Body," John Paul II shows his affinity for the social view of the *imago Dei* as *imago Trinitas*:

Man [the human] became the image of God not only through his own humanity, but also through the communion of persons, which man and woman form from the very beginning. ...Man becomes an image of God not so much in the moment of solitude as in the moment of communion. He is, in fact, "from the beginning" not only an image in which the solitude of one Person, who rules the world, mirrors itself, but also and essentially the image of an inscrutable divine communion of Persons.¹⁷

According to John Paul II, "the authentic development of the image and likeness of God, in its trinitarian meaning, [is] its meaning precisely 'of communion.'"¹⁸ Humans image God not so much as individuals but in community and the most accurate picture of human community mirroring the divine community is the heterosexual, marital union of one man and one woman. And marital union, according to the Pope, is related to the sexual act:

The unity about which Gen. 2:24 speaks ("and the two will become one flesh") is without doubt the unity that is expressed and realized in the conjugal act... The fact that they become "one flesh" is a powerful bond established by the Creator through

14 Stanley J. Grenz, *Sexual Ethics: An Evangelical Perspective* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), 190, 191-192.

15 Ibid., 193.

16 Grenz's reading of relationality through the lens of sexuality is most evident in his *Sexual Ethics, The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001) esp. chapter 7; "Is God Sexual? Human Embodiment and the Christian Conception of God," in *This is My Name Forever: The Trinity and Gender Language for God*, ed. Alvin F. Kimel Jr. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 190-212; "The Social God and the Relational Self: Toward a Trinitarian Theology of the *Imago Dei*," "Theological Foundations for Male-Female Relationships," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41:4 (1998) : 615-630; and in *The Moral Quest: Foundations of Christian Ethics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 276-297. It is significantly downplayed in his systematic text, *Theology for the Community of God*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); and noticeably absent from his essays, "Belonging to God: The Quest for Communal Spirituality in the Postmodern World," *Asbury Theological Journal* 54 no. 2 (Fall 1999) : 41-52; and "Jesus as the *Imago Dei*: Image-of-God Christology and the Non-Linear Linearity of Theology," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47:4 (December 2004) : 617-628. The absence of any mention of sexuality in Grenz's latter work could be interpreted as an indication that Grenz moved away from employing the lens of sexuality for relationality and community. Nevertheless, given the influence of his wider texts (*Sexual Ethics* and *The Social God and the Relational Self*) a critique of his position is nevertheless warranted.

17 John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 163, 9:3.

18 Ibid., 427, 77:2.

which they discover their own humanity, both in its original unity and in the duality of a mysterious reciprocal attraction.¹⁹

Notice that it is sexual union which realizes and expresses marital union and that sexual union enables the couple to “discover their own humanity.” What is the meaning of human existence which sexual union enables couples to discover? It is love. The late Pope writes:

The human body, with its sex—its masculinity and femininity—...contains “from the beginning” the “spousal” attribute, that is *the power to express love: precisely that love in which the human person becomes a gift* and—through this gift—fulfills the very meaning of his being and existence.²⁰

For John Paul II spousal love is the paradigmatic form of human love as a gift of self. Sexual love is the gift of the whole self—the whole body (including its reproductive functions which are not to be impaired by artificial forms of contraception). Following St. John of the Cross, John Paul II argues that spousal love as “self-gift” is grounded in Trinitarian love.²¹ Even the vocation of celibacy, which the Pope continues to uphold as superior to the vocation of marriage, is viewed through the lens of the spousal/sexual self/body.

Roman Catholic theologian David Matzko McCarthy explains that this perspective arose in order to correct earlier Roman Catholic views on marriage which saw little to no value in marital sexuality beyond procreation.²² But the new perspective elevates sexuality to such an extent that sexual love is now seen as the basis for all Christian love. McCarthy explains,

...[this] account follows modern trends by highlighting sex and sexual desire as ideal expressions of love. Sex is considered representative of conjugal love, and conjugal intercourse is considered a good and sacramental experience. Through a sexual relationship, we discover our humanity in intimate communion with each other as “Other,” and, in the process, encounter God’s grace.²³

Both evangelicals and Roman Catholics are connecting the image of God to married sexuality—male and female in heterosexual union. For both traditions, heterosexual marital union is reflective of Trinitarian love and paradigmatic of Christian love and human relationality.

Now, there is much in these proposals to recommend them. The assertion that the meaning of human existence is love and that this love is grounded in God, who is a community of love, is central to the Christian faith. What is problematic is that human love, and the divine love after which it has become an image, is being labeled as sexual. This is what John Paul II and Stanley Grenz have done. John Paul II has made spousal/sexual love the paradigmatic form of Christian love while Grenz has presented sexuality as the basis for all relationality. The social *imago* has become the spousal/sexual *imago*.

The shifts from the social *imago* to the spousal/sexual *imago* have dangerous consequences

19 Ibid., 167, 10:2.

20 Complete quotation: “The human body, with its sex—its masculinity and femininity—seen in the very mystery of creation, is not only a source of fruitfulness and of procreation, as in the whole natural order, but contains ‘from the beginning’ the ‘spousal’ attribute, that is *the power to express love: precisely that love in which the human person becomes a gift* and—through this gift—fulfills the very meaning of his being and existence.” John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, Michael Waldstein, trans. and ed. (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006), 185-186, 15:1, italics original to John Paul II.

21 Waldstein is careful to point out that John Paul II never uses spousal language of the Trinity. Nevertheless, his central text, John 17:10, is transposed from God the Father and God the Son onto marriage: “All that is mine is yours and yours is mine, and I am glorified in them.” Waldstein, “Introduction,” *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 33.

22 “In the mid-twentieth century, theological personalism emerged, in Catholic circles, as a challenge to instrumental and juridical understandings of marriage. Personalism offered a challenge to the idea that marriage is not good in itself but produces only external goods like children and social stability.” David Matzko McCarthy, *Sex and Love in the Home: A Theology of the Household*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM Press, 2004), 4-5.

23 Ibid., 24.

which I will briefly note before suggesting several ways we can correct these traditions in order to preserve the social *imago* by protecting it from sexual distortions.

Uncovering Hidden Dangers

The Sexualization of God's Love

One of the first dangers inherent in this reading of the social *imago* is the sexualization of divine love. While John Paul II is careful not to speak of divine love as sexual or spousal, Pope Benedict XVI's first encyclical defended the claim that, while God's love is "totally *agape*," it is not inappropriate to speak of God's love as *eros*. He admits that *eros* and *agape* have been pitted against one another in the history of Christianity, where *eros* has been understood as "ascending" love while *agape* is presented as "descending" love.²⁴ While acknowledging that the biblical authors (and Septuagint translators) do not use the term *eros* explicitly, he finds it in Pseudo-Dionysius²⁵ and defends it on the basis of the Old Testament prophets,

particularly Hosea and Ezekiel, [who] described God's passion for his people using boldly erotic images. God's relationship with Israel is described using the metaphors of betrothal and marriage; idolatry is thus adultery and prostitution.²⁶

Like Benedict XVI, Stanley Grenz also defends speaking of God's love as *eros* on the basis of biblical metaphors of marriage—God's marriage to the ancient Israelites and Christ's marriage to the Church.²⁷ It is true that the relation of sexuality to *eros* is nuanced and varies from author to author; still, it is important to understand that both Benedict XVI and Grenz see *eros* as connected to human sexuality while extending beyond it in such a way as to apply to divine relationality.²⁸

Unlike both John Paul II and Benedict XVI, Grenz is willing to speak not only of God's *eros* but of God's sexuality. For Grenz, God is sexual, but not because God engages in genital sexual relations with the other members of the Trinity or with humans. These are ways in which the Hebrew God differed from other gods of the ancient Near East. Nevertheless, Grenz is willing to speak of God as sexual, because God is relational and willing to employ gendered language (both male and female) when revealing Godself in the Scriptures. Here we find that Grenz's conflation of sex, gender, and sexuality all under the language of sexuality and his insistence that relationality is fundamentally connected to sexuality leave him no choice but to conclude that God is sexual.²⁹ But, this sexualization of Trinitarian love creates other problems.

24 Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, I.7. Earlier in the encyclical, Benedict XVI differentiates between various presentations of *eros*, insisting that *eros*, when not debased, rises "in ecstasy" toward the Divine, [leading] us beyond ourselves. *Deus caritas est*, I.5.

25 Ibid., I.7 endnote 7.

26 Ibid., I.9.

27 Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 319.

28 Grenz also defends speaking of God's love as *eros* provided that *eros* is understood as "desire for communion with the beloved" (Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 320; cf. *The Moral Quest*, 288-291). When he considers human *eros*, Grenz insists that *eros* is not identical with sexual desire but closely related. Like others, he draws a distinction between *venus* "the drive to propagate the species through procreation" and *eros* "the communion which the sex act nurtures between sex partners, which sets humans above the world of nature" (*Sexual Ethics*, 19). Grenz employs "sexuality" or "sexual desire" in the same broad way that *eros* is sometimes used. It is inclusive of genital sexuality (among humans) but not limited to it: "'Sexual desire' refers to the need we all have to experience wholeness and intimacy through relationships with others. It relates to the dimension often called *eros*, the human longing to possess and be possessed by the object of one's desire. Understood in this way, *eros* ought not be limited to genital sexual acts, but encompasses a broad range of human actions and desires, and it participates even in the religious dimension of life in the form of the desire to know and be known by God. For many people, the desire for sex, the longing to express one's sexuality through genital acts (*venus*), is psychologically inseparable from sexual desire. Nevertheless, for the development of true sexual maturity, a person must come to terms with the difference between these two dimensions and learn to separate them both in one's own psychological state and in overt action" (*Sexual Ethics*, 20-21).

29 Grenz, Stanley J. "Is God Sexual? Human Embodiment and the Christian Conception of God," 190-212.

Weakening Traditional Christian Sexual Ethics

While Grenz wants to ground heterosexual sexuality in the social Trinity, he does not go so far as to see the Trinity as grounds for other forms of sexuality. But other theologians have no such qualms. Marilyn McCord Adams of Duke University argues that Trinitarian relations give us the theological foundation not only for heterosexual marriage but for a human *ménage à trios*, incest, and homosexual unions. She writes, “Whether or not, in which personal dimensions and to what extent, human *ménage à trios* can be an icon of godly love, depends in part on our varying assessments of human capacity for intimacy and functional household organization.” Here she notes the endurance of polygamy among African households even after their conversion to Christianity and identifies Jacob, Leah, and Rachel as a possible biblical example of a holy marriage of three.³⁰ She explores the issue of incest, arguing that the problem with incest in human relations is inequality—typically imposition on a minor who is not able to give full consent. But, given the full equality of Father and Son, incest in the Trinity does not suffer from the same weakness.³¹ McCord Adams and many other theologians have drawn the connection between Trinitarian love and homosexual love—given the traditional gendered names for first and second person of the Trinity. Grounding human sexuality in Trinitarian relations has many applications—some quite beyond those which Grenz and John Paul II would approve.

Undermining the Goodness of Celibacy

Another danger lurking in the connection between Trinitarian love and human sexuality is the danger of undermining the goodness of celibacy—whether willed celibacy as a religious vocation or unwilled celibacy as a disappointment and lifelong struggle for virtue outside the bonds of marriage, or on account of the death of a spouse, or the sexual unavailability of a spouse. If sexuality is the most accurate way in which humans image divine love, if sexual union gives us a privileged experience of Trinitarian union, then it becomes difficult to insist on celibacy for the unmarried or to uphold the goodness of celibacy as a commendable Christian lifestyle. For those who would like to be married—those who have not entered into a spiritual marriage with Christ through religious celibacy—spiritual second-class citizenship is added to the burden of the virtuous life.³²

Sexual Dysfunction becomes Spiritual Dysfunction

The spiritualization of sexuality can also bring about problems for the married. For those 43% of women and 31% of men whose bodies make sexual intimacy difficult, painful, or impossible, spiritual disappointment can be added to physical frustration.³³ Not only must these persons

30 Marilyn McCord Adams, “Trinitarian Friendship: Same-gender Models of Godly Love in Richard of St. Victor and Aelred of Rievaulx,” in *Theology and Sexuality: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, Eugene F. Rogers, Jr., ed. (London: Blackwell, 2002), 335. More attention to the actual marriage of Jacob to Rachel and Leah should provide ample arguments against (rather than for) polygamy.

31 Ibid.

32 John Paul II sees only two paths for human fulfillment of the “spousal meaning of the body”: human marriage (the total gift of self to another human) or spiritual marriage (religious celibacy, the gift of self “totally to Christ”). John Paul II, *Male and Female He Created Them*, 439; 80:6. His proposal leaves no place for the humanity of those who would like to be married (thus refraining from celibate religious vows) but have not found a spouse. Christine A. Colón and Bonnie E. Field address the second-class nature of unmarried evangelicals in *Singled Out: Why Celibacy Must Be Reinvented in Today's Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2009), 126-132.

33 Laumann *et al* report that 43% (or 25% - 64%) of women and 31% (or 10%-52%) of men report sexual dysfunction. Dysfunction was defined as “(1) lacking desire for sex; (2) arousal difficulties (i.e., erection problems in men, lubrication difficulties in women); (3) inability achieving climax or ejaculation; (4) anxiety about sexual performance; (5) climaxing or ejaculating too rapidly; (6) physical pain during intercourse; and (7) not finding sex pleasurable.” E.O. Laumann, A. Paik, R.C. Rosen, “Sexual Dysfunction in the United States: Prevalence and Predictors,” *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 281: 6 (Feb 10, 1999) : 537-44. Hypoactive Sexual Desire Disorder or low libido is reported by 33.4% of women; 14.4% report pain during intercourse. Tracee Cornforth, “Female Sexual Dysfunction: Common Sexual Disorders and Causes of Decreased Libido,” *About.com* (December 10, 2009), <http://womenshealth.about.com/cs/sexualdysfunction/a/femalesexdysfun.htm>.

struggle with their own unresponsive bodies or that of their spouse, but they have the added layer of frustration at failing to experience the mystical-spiritual union which sexuality is supposed to grant. For married couples with unequal sexual desire, spiritual guilt can be added to personal guilt and frustration. For those 10-40% of girls and 5-13% of boys who have been sexually abused and for the subgroup who are psychologically or physically prevented from entering into healthy sexual relations because of the trauma they have suffered, spiritual disappointment is added to disappointment with God for what feels like a failure to protect them when they were most vulnerable.³⁴

To his credit, Grenz acknowledges some of these difficulties (specifically “debilitating physical problems... due to illness, accident, or the aging process” which interrupt sexual relations in marriage) and cautions against overvaluing the sexual act within marriage. He insists that “sexual intercourse is not the ‘end all’ of marriage.”³⁵ Nevertheless, the overall value which he places on sexuality as the basis for human relationality and Christian spirituality and his description of sex as “the most intimate and meaningful act embodying the deep union of husband and wife that lies at the basis of marriage” tends to obscure his cautionary statement.³⁶

When theologians work to correct centuries of the devaluation of sexuality by grounding human sexuality in the Trinity and elevating sexuality to the heights of spiritual significance, they sometimes forget the underside of sexuality. Not everyone can have sex—physically, psychologically, or for want of a partner. Not everyone has sexual desire. Not everyone experiences sex as pleasurable or loving. For some, the sexual drive to develop relationships with others has led to unfaithfulness in too many marriages—where the sexual connection with one’s legal partner has become stale or difficult or impossible.³⁷

Sexuality is a good gift of the Creator. Marriage is a good gift of God. But elevating sexuality as the center of human identity, the paradigm of self-giving, the ground for human relations, and the pattern of divine love swings the pendulum too far. The connection of marriage and sexuality to the image of God risks sexualizing Trinitarian relationality, weakens traditional Christian sexual ethics, undermines the goodness of celibacy, and can add the unnecessary burden of spiritual dysfunction to sexual dysfunction. Providentially, these dangers can be avoided.

Clarifying Conflations to Correct the Traditions

How do we hold onto the good while avoiding some of the dangers inherent in Evangelical and Roman Catholic theologies of the body? First, we must clarify two significant conflations which Grenz and John Paul II have introduced: The Social is not the Sexual. Nor is the Sexual the Spousal. The way to begin is through a better reading of Genesis.

34 The World Health Organization reports that 10-25% of girls are victims of child sexual abuse and cite studies conducted mostly in developed countries wherein 5–10% of men report being sexually abused as children. The Kinsey Institute, “Frequently Asked Sexuality Questions: Sexual Violence,” Dec. 6, 2010, <http://www.iub.edu/~kinsey/resources/FAQ.html#who2004>; citing “World Health Organization, Sexual health—a new focus for WHO,” *Progress in Sexual and Reproductive Health Research* 2004, 67. Steven Tracy cites even higher figures, listing female sexual abuse between 24-32% and some as high as 42% in “Where is God in the Midst of the Suffering of Abuse,” *Africanus Journal* 2, no. 2 (November 2010), 48; citing R. M. Bolen and M. Scannapieco, “Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse: A Corrective Meta-analysis,” *Social Science Review* 73 (1999): 281-313; and J. Briere and D. M. Elliott, “Prevalence and Psychological Sequelae of Self-Reported Childhood Physical and Sexual Abuse in a General Population Sample of Men and Women,” *Child Abuse and Neglect* 27 (2003): 1205-1222.

35 Grenz, *Sexual Ethics*, 92.

36 Ibid.

37 “In short, adultery declares the triumph of *eros* over *agape*, as personal desire for another outside the marriage relationship is placed above the desire to accept unconditionally and to fulfill the needs of the other with whom he or she has previously entered into covenant.” Grenz, *Sexual Ethics*, 111.

The Social Is Not the Sexual

It may be that the social *imago* is a valid reading of the creation of Adam and Eve as communal image of the Trinity. The social view of the image of God has much to commend it.³⁸ At the same time, it is vitally important to protect the social *imago* from devolving into the sexual *imago*. The relation of Adam and Eve does not need to be read entirely through the language of sexuality. This can be argued in two ways.

First, even if one grants that the relationship of Adam and Eve was primarily sexual, this does not mean that sexual relation is the paradigmatic form for human relations generally. Such an interpretation does not take into account the place of Adam and Eve in redemptive-canonical history. Yes, Adam and Eve were created male and female, and, yes, it was this difference that brought delight and enabled them to marry and help one another in the filling and subduing of the earth. (And, yes, this is the basis for the Christian defense of marriage as a union of one man and one woman.) In the case of Adam and Eve, sexual differentiation and sexual desire were the very things that brought them together—the basis for their relationality and bonding (as Grenz has argued). But the filling of the earth, which their sexuality accomplished, brought other relationships—parents to children, siblings, cousins, uncles, grandparents, friends, strangers, and enemies. These relationships take into account biological sex differences and gendered relations, but they are not sexual *per se*. Sexual differentiation and sexual desire were foundational—the foundation for other human relations—but not paradigmatic. *Adam and Eve can be read as the progenitors rather than the paradigm of all human relationality.*

A second way to correct our reading of Genesis is to say that, even if we grant the sexual relation between Adam and Eve (they were after all the mother and father of all living), we narrow our vision of male and female partnership by viewing it or labeling it as sexual. Men and women cooperate in the world in many complementary ways far beyond the sexual. We need men and women in partnership not only in marriage, but in the church, in society, and in the academy. Labeling these relations “social sexuality” as Grenz has done may actually undermine the ability of men and women to work together, building healthy relationships that are holy and life-giving precisely because they are non-sexual. A better reading of Genesis will differentiate between the social and the sexual. It will also differentiate between the sexual and the spousal.

The Spousal Is Not the Sexual

Another way to guard especially the Roman Catholic *Theology of the Body* is to differentiate between the sexual and the spousal. Unfortunately, this is something that John Paul II did not do well. Just as Grenz creates unnecessary problems by conflating sexuality with relationality, so John Paul II creates problems by conflating sexual love with spousal love. John Paul II rarely uses the language of sexuality. Rather he speaks of “the conjugal act,” “uniting so as to become one flesh,” “reciprocal attraction,” “nuptial,” or “spousal” love as ways to express sexual desire and action between husband and wife.³⁹

While his desire to keep his presentation of sexuality within the bounds of heterosexual marriage should be applauded, such imprecision is indefensible in a theologian of his caliber. There are many forms of marital or conjugal love that are not sexual. When my husband and I remodeled

38 It is especially valuable as a means to correct the history of Roman Catholic and Protestant theological exegesis which has argued that the male is the more perfect image of God to which woman is deviation, or lesser glory. The idea that God is a community of love and created humans to image the community of love in sameness and difference has theological weight as well as practical power to change the ways in which we live in the world.

The social view does not need to eclipse other interpretations of the *imago*. Most theologians continue to highlight the significance of human reason and human responsibility to steward our care for creation. Nevertheless, modern history has illustrated how exclusive emphasis on rationality and rule has been the demise of the West, as children of the modern Enlightenment. The Rule of Reason is not enough. Love, community, mutuality are essential virtues, lost when reason and rule are the center of our vision of God and God's image in humanity.

39 John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 167, 10:2; 185-186, 15:1.

our home to make space for his parents, I did this out of conjugal love. My love for my husband extends to his family. By uniting myself with him for life, I have united myself with his family and their needs. This is conjugal love, spousal love, but it is not sexual.

Speaking of marriage as the justification of *eros* shortchanges marriage of other essential loves and distorts its usefulness as a theological analogy for divine love. Marriage is an important analogy for divine love, but not because marriage justifies *eros* or sexual love. Marriage is an important metaphor because it is a picture of faithfulness over time, faithfulness that embraces our bodies as well as our minds, our past as well as our future, our joys as well as our disappointments, our ecstatic moments as well as our deepest grief. Marriage is a wonderful metaphor, but it is only that—a metaphor. The Church's marriage to God is not literal (we do not look forward to genital sex with Jesus). Nor is marriage the only metaphor or always the best metaphor able to illustrate the love of God.

Jesus said: "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13).⁴⁰ According to Jesus, martyrdom, not marriage, is the best picture of divine love. Despite the fact that some Roman Catholic authors have tried to show how Christ's cross can be understood as "nuptials...the marriage bed mounted not in pleasure but in pain,"⁴¹ a more careful reading of Ephesians 5:25⁴² will show that it is marriage which is redeemed through martyrdom, not martyrdom redeemed through marriage.⁴³ It is only by separating the spousal from the sexual (marriage from *eros*) that we are able to preserve the usefulness of the analogy of marriage for Christian spirituality and recover the centrality of the love of the social Trinity delivered from sexual distortions.

Conclusion

There is much to commend in Evangelical and Roman Catholic theologies of the body. The social *imago* based on the social Trinity—the divine community of love—is the right place to begin thinking through the theological significance of human personhood as fundamentally relational and our calling to live in love: "God is love and those who live in love live in God and God in them" (I John 4:16). Nevertheless, these traditions must be improved by clarifying the conflation of the social with the sexual and the sexual with the spousal in order to avoid dangerous misapplications. I have suggested that a better reading of Genesis will retain the communal element of male and female without reducing the social *imago* to spousal sexuality.

Megan K. DeFranza holds two masters degrees from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (in Theology and Biblical Languages) and a Ph.D. in Religious Studies from Marquette University (Milwaukee, WI). This article draws from several points made in her dissertation entitled "Intersex and Imago: Sex, Gender, and Sexuality in Postmodern Theological Anthropology." She lives with her husband, Andrew, and two daughters, Lórien and Eden, in Beverly, Massachusetts and is currently serving as a visiting instructor at Gordon-Conwell.

40 TNIV

41 Christopher West, *The Love that Satisfies: Reflections on Eros & Agape* (West Chester, PA: Ascension Press, 2007), 81.

42 "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her..."

43 Evangelical Lisa Graham McMinn draws upon both Grenz and Rolheiser when she writes, "Men and women's willingness to give up control, to serve and nurture, to create, to give sacrificially for the sake of others, to invest in authentic relationships with others reflects a God who graciously serves, nurtures, creates, sacrifices, and invests in those whom God loves. These are acts of redemptive sexuality that maintain relationships and communities that are strong and vibrant" (*Sexuality and Holy Longings: Embracing Intimacy in a Broken World* [San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004], 176). Her statement illustrates the subtle slip that has occurred in much writing on sexuality and spirituality. McMinn calls sacrificial loving "redeemed sexuality" when it would be better to present sacrificial loving as the way to redeem sexuality. Benedict XVI gives a more accurate portrait in *Deus Caritas est*, when he argues that *eros* (self-seeking, need-love) must be purified by *agape* (love as self-gift). Nevertheless, his justification of *eros* on the basis of martial metaphors in the Scriptures shows how he too reduces martial love to *eros*, rather than placing *eros* as one facet of the rich love shared between husband and wife.

Global Voices on Biblical Equality

Women and Men
Ministering Together
in the Church

edited by

Aída Besançon Spencer,
William David Spencer,
and Mimi Haddad

Please see www.houseofpriscaandaquila.com.

978-1-55635-055-9 | 264 pp. | Retail: \$29 | paper

Global Voices on Biblical Equality is a fresh look at the contextualizing of gender equality throughout the world. Biblical equality is a burgeoning, global reform movement led by scholars and leaders not only in North America but also on every continental landmass in the world. What inroads is biblical equality making around the globe? What is its appeal? What still needs reform? How is biblical equality transforming each culture? In this book, female and male writers who are ethnically part of every continent explore the contextual challenges, successes, and adaptations of engaging the biblical text on gender and ministry.

The editors of this volume are Aída Besançon Spencer, William David Spencer, and Mimi Haddad.

Other contributors include John Runyon (Associate Director for Enrollment Management and adjunct professor), CUME graduates Darin Vincent Poullard and Eliana Marques Runyon, and GCTS Hamilton graduates Matthew D. Kim, Sandra Gatlin Whitley, Awilda Gonzalez-Tejera, Beulah Wood, and others.

PA House of Prisca & Aquila Series

"Having heard Apollos, Priscilla and Aquila took him aside and more accurately expounded to him the way of God" (Acts 18:26)

Global Voices on Biblical Equality

Women and Men Ministering Together in the Church



EDITED BY

AÍDA BESANÇON SPENCER
WILLIAM DAVID SPENCER
MIMI HADDAD

WIPF & STOCK
An Imprint of WIPF and STOCK Publishers

199 West 8th Avenue, Suite. 3, Eugene, OR 97401
Tel. (541) 344-1528 | Fax (541) 344-1506
Visit our Web site at www.wipfandstock.com

Is He Risen Indeed?

Challenges to Jesus' Resurrection from the Sanhedrin to the *Jesus Family Tomb*¹

William David Spencer

Did Jesus Christ authentically come back to life after he was completely dead – did he, in fact, rise up again? Since the time of Jesus' death, people have been questioning whether Jesus actually died – and, if he did die, whether he really came back to life from authentic clinical death. The question is a sincere one, an honest one, and a contemporary one for our time as well as for times past. In both the modern and post-modern ages, a number of scholars have raised questions about the validity of Jesus' resurrection.

My thesis is that Jesus Christ did indeed die and come back to life from complete clinical death. In order to establish this thesis, we will explore the arguments for the challenges that Jesus did not die but simply fainted on the cross and revived in the tomb, died and was represented as alive, was moved to an unknown, unidentified tomb, impersonated so as to appear risen, among others. We will then examine conspiracy theories involving Jesus and/or his disciples. We will then review the arguments that Jesus did indeed clinically die and the evidence that he reappeared alive. In this section, we will examine alternate theories that his reappearance was caused by hallucination, cognitive dissonance, or deliberate invention (with special attention to the books *The Passover Plot*, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, *The Da Vinci Code*, and *The Jesus Family Tomb*). Finally, we will end with a practical application.

Did Jesus Actually Die?

In the 1960s, the scholar Hugh Schonfield in his book *The Passover Plot* posited the idea that Jesus planned out his execution and resurrection, intending to survive the former and then stage the latter. Drugged on the cross and appearing to be dead, he was taken to the tomb, where, in the coolness, with the spices and linens, he recovered (at least temporarily).² Schonfield then appealed to the pseudepigraphical 5th or 6th century Coptic *Book of the Resurrection of Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle*, which, in order to explain the existence of the empty tomb, claims that a gardener named Philogenes moved Jesus' body to a second tomb.³ This tradition apparently keys off Mary Magdalene's question in John 20:15, when, "supposing [the risen Christ] to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.'"⁴ The sardonic lawyer Tertullian (c. C.E. 160-240), who became a Christian c.197, included this objection to the resurrection in his ironic dismissal, "This is he whom his disciples have stolen away secretly, that it may be said he is risen, or the gardener abstracted that his lettuces might not be damaged by the crowd of visitors!"⁵ Tertullian's refusal to take such a speculation seriously is certainly in keeping with his characteristically practical approach to legal arguments. After all, this outrageous suggestion assumes a scenario where no guard bothers to check and see if the body of Jesus is actually lying in the tomb before they roll a heavy sealing stone before it and seal it (the gardener having sneaked in and dragged it off before they arrived), or, if

1 This article is an updating of an earlier version that was presented in eleven installments in the Gordon-Conwell Alumni/ae White Papers Archives, March 2009.

2 See Hugh Schonfield, *The Passover Plot* (New York, NY: Bernard Geis, 1965), 162-70.

3 M.S. Enslin, "Bartholomew the Apostle, Book of the Resurrection of Christ By," in ed. George Arthur Buttrick, et. al., *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, Abingdon, 1962), 1. 360-61.

4 All Bible quotations New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) unless otherwise noted.

5 Schonfield, *The Passover Plot*, 171.

the body were still there, failing to post a reliable sentry, all the guards sprawling out and dozing while the gardener picks his way through their midst, shoulders the corpse, and grunts it away over top of them all (having broken the official seal and hauled back the sealing stone while they snore) - despite the fear of discovery and official reprisal, which probably, at the very least, would have involved a flogging or some such corporal punishment. Or maybe the guards just evaporated, or all repaired to a nearby pub to drink and play checkers (ancient game that it is), on their return noticing the broken seal and disturbed stone and somehow talking the women who had shown up to anoint Jesus' body into colluding with their quickly slapped-together excuse of an angelic warrior descending on the tomb, rolling back the stone, sitting down on it, and confronting them (Matt. 28:2-4). (And all this despite the probability that these particular women would have been naturally hostile toward guards who represented the forces who had just murdered their Lord and, thus, hardly ready to collaborate on an excuse for the guards' dereliction of duty). And why a gardener who goes to the effort to haul the brutalized corpse of a criminal out of a cave and drag it elsewhere, spurred by the sole motivation of keeping the inevitable, gawking crowd, that such an infamous final-scene-of-the-accident would attract, from trampling his plants, would at the same time tell no one he did such an act, thereby undermining his expressed goal of protecting his vegetables (as the speculation claims), is incomprehensible. A simple sign at the garden gate, "Jesus' Tomb Detour: Down the hill, right at the first olive tree, third cave on the left for new location," would have served such a purpose better than silence and a gaping, enigmatic, empty tomb, beckoning to the curious. Simply transplanting his lettuces rather than risking a whipping would have also made much more sense.

At any rate, Schonfield then goes even further and speculates that Jesus "regained consciousness temporarily, but finally succumbed" from the spear wound,⁶ whereupon a plan B Jesus concocted, in the event he did not survive, went into effect, in which a confederate unknown to his disciples or other intimates impersonated him as the resurrected Christ. This is why, Schonfield explains, Mary and the travelers on the road to Emmaus did not recognize the risen Christ and the disciples had to be told by the gullible John it was the Lord, so that "none... dared to ask him, 'Who are you?'" at the miraculous catch of fish in John 21:7, 14 - a miracle, of course, which is conveniently omitted from the discussion.⁷ Also among the missing in Schonfield's explanation is skeptical Thomas, his Missourian "show-me" challenge, and the stigmata offered as proof by the risen Christ (John 20:24-29). As carefully as Schonfield qualifies his hypothesis, he apparently realized that positing this hypothetical young imposter would allow his own hands and sides to be pierced to accomplish Jesus' scheme would be to demand a level of credulity insufficient in even the most naïve reader, so he also omits the stigmata, his hermeneutic appearing to be: If it fits my theory, it's authentic.

Schonfield does allow one more possibility for his speculated young stand-in, what we might call his Plan C, "the man concerned, if there was but one, was a medium, and that Jesus, risen from the dead into the After Life in the Spiritualist sense, spoke through him."⁸ Given this possibility, we should be heartened that he does not suggest a Plan D, namely, that Jesus was descended from UFO visitors who "were not very different from us," who "left behind...earthmen and their impregnated wives...[who] regarded the whole event as miracle and grace," Jesus resurrecting after he "died" by the application of a "pure energy field" that created "a mesoic state," wherein his body experienced a "stabilization," a power possessed by "hybrid children of the gods."⁹ He leaves that proposal to Gerhard R. Steinhäuser in his *Jesus Christ: Heir to the*

⁶ Ibid., 172.

⁷ Ibid., 173-79.

⁸ Ibid., 179.

⁹ Gerhard R. Steinhäuser, *Jesus Christ: Heir to the Astronauts* (New York, NY: Pockets Book, 1975), 54, 82, 88, 30, 36, 88. See also chapter 4, "Was God an Astronaut?" in Erich Von Daniken, *Chariots of the Gods?* (New York, NY: Putnam's, 1970), 51-62.

Astronauts. Plan E might be James Churchward's, who attributes Jesus' miraculous power to a relationship with the lost continent of Mu, which made him "the perfect example of the soul force being in perfect control over the mind and body,"¹⁰ but that need not detain us here.

Instead, staying with Plan A, we should note that seventeen years later the theory that Jesus planned and then staged his crucifixion and did not really die on the cross was reworked in another best-selling book, entitled: *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*.

Now the departure from the original records becomes even more pronounced. Jesus is no longer a simple carpenter, but "an aristocrat," "a priest-king" (despite his reported birth in a stable and lack of descent from Levite lineage) who was a "legitimate claimant to the throne – embarking on an attempt to regain his rightful heritage."¹¹ This campaign involved "supporters," who included "a powerful member of the Sanhedrin" who "may also have been his kin," "a wife's family," "working in collusion with" Pilate, who was "a corrupt, easily bribed Roman procurator," so that "an execution was then staged – in which a substitute took the priest-king's place on the cross," while "the general populace kept at a convenient distance" (the disciples presumably standing at the foot of the cross working out the last minute details with Jesus), so that Jesus' "friends in high places...appear to have engineered a mock crucifixion...in which the priest-king himself did not actually die."¹² Whether the "substitute" who took Jesus' place died in this "scenario" is not clear, since the text now places quotation marks around the word "body," telling readers that at "dusk – which would have impeded visibility – a 'body' was removed to an opportunely adjacent tomb from which, a day or two later, it 'miraculously' disappeared."¹³ What happened to Jesus? The authors speculate he may have traveled in India, died at Masada, or "eventually died, at a ripe old age," after settling in Egypt, possibly even accompanying his family to Marseilles and dying in France.¹⁴ As for the "substitute" who "took the priest-king's place on the cross," he conveniently drops out of sight. The authors seem unclear whether to put Jesus on the cross or not, but the important thing on which they do agree is that "the priest-king himself did not actually die."¹⁵ Twenty-four years later, in 2006, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* co-author Michael Baigent, alone this time, was still refining this theory, attempting to salvage it after a savaging by critics who simply demonstrated all the misreading and mishandling of the Gospel records that went into such a fantastic, eisegetical reconstruction. Gone now is the substitute on the cross. Apparently, the ludicrous claim that the population would not notice a ringer was being foisted off on the shills, so as to say, had become so painfully apparent that Jesus was back up on the cross and in bad enough shape that even Pilate thought he was dead, referring to Jesus' body as a "corpse."¹⁶ Baigent now speculates:

Jesus had not died, but it appears that he was in urgent need of medical treatment. He was taken down from the cross and placed in an empty tomb. Then, once night had fallen, according to John's Gospel, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus came with medicinal potions. Once Jesus was considered out of danger, I have suggested, they took him out of the tomb and away to safety, to a place where he could recuperate... And what happened then? We cannot know, but he did not – despite the mythology about him which has been created – vanish from the face of the earth. He went *somewhere*.¹⁷

10 James Churchward, *The Lost Continent of Mu* (New York, NY: Paperback Library, 1968), which reprints the 1931 original, 284.

11 Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (New York, NY: Delacorte, 1982), 330.

12 Ibid., 330-31.

13 Ibid., 331.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Michael Baigent, *The Jesus Papers* (New York, NY: Harper SanFrancisco, 2006), 262-63.

17 Ibid., 262-63.

Where? Baigent at this point stops trying to patch up this section of his theory's gaping holes: "For the purposes of our hypothesis, however, what happened to Jesus was of less importance than what happened to the holy family – and especially to his brother in law, his wife, and his children."¹⁸ A central task of his 2006 book, of course, is to salvage his theory from the wreck of *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, which was discredited due to its many problems, not least of which is that the authors were deluded by a subsequently revealed French felon convicted of fraud who wanted to be declared King of France. He had a confederate plant false documents in the French archives claiming Jesus had married Mary Magdalene, fathered a daughter, and then been crucified. The disciples spirited mother and daughter away to France and this conman claimed he had descended from that girl, who had mothered what would become the line of the kings of France, and was, therefore, the rightful heir of the French throne, presumably if France ever decided to reinstitute the monarchy.¹⁹ So, along with the substitute on the cross, the French felon and his self-serving and fanciful claims have also been jettisoned. Baigent is still trying to navigate his Titanic through the treacherous seas of plausibility.

Another embarrassing barnacle on the hull of Baigent's theory is Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code*, which Baigent acknowledges "draws in part from our books' theories,"²⁰ in other words, being built on that preposterous, fictitious history. *The Da Vinci Code* is, of course, a rousing adventure story filled with wonderful puzzles and egregious errors both large and small, such as, misidentifying the Coptic *Gospel Of Philip* as having been written in Aramaic.²¹ It also misrepresents the Christian emperor Constantine as "a lifelong pagan"²² and distorts historical facts, such as positing that Constantine established the theory of the divinity of Christ ("Until *that* moment in history, Jesus was viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet...a great and powerful man, but a *man* nonetheless. A mortal... Constantine turned Jesus into a deity who existed beyond the scope of the human world"²³). The fact is, however, that the emperor lived some 200 years after John reported Thomas' confession to Jesus in his Gospel: "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28), while John himself wrote of Jesus: "No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known" (John 1:18). Brown also confuses traditional Jewish orthodoxy with condemned Canaanite practices that polluted Israel's faith and invoked God's punishment: "early Jewish tradition involved ritualistic sex. *In the Temple, no less*. Early Jews believed that the Holy of Holies in Solomon's Temple housed not only God but also His powerful female equal, Shekinah. Men seeking spiritual wholeness came to the Temple to visit priestesses – or *hierodules* –with whom they made love."²⁴ He also misidentifies "the Jewish Tetragrammaton YHWH – the sacred name of God" as "in fact derived from Jehovah, an androgynous physical union between the masculine *Jah* and the pre-Hebraic name for Eve, *Havah*,"²⁵ despite the fact that the Tetragrammaton is built from the imperfect of the Hebrew word "to be" (*hyh* into *yhwh*), "I Will Be" (that is, God is the One who exists now and through the future) (as God told Moses in Exodus 3:14), given the vowel points of 'adonai (Lord) by pious Jews who would not pronounce the name of God, which was considered too sacred to be read. Over the years many came to consider the substitute "Lord" as too sacred and substituted such terms as "The Holy One" and today have moved to simply "The Name."

In other words, *The Da Vinci Code* makes enough elementary mistakes in research scholarship to inspire over thirty books correcting its errors. This volume has been so widely chastised in print,

18 Ibid., 332.

19 James L. Garlow and Peter Jones give a good summary of this scam and its exposure in their book, *Cracking Da Vinci's Code* (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 2004), 112-13.

20 Ibid., xiii.

21 Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2003), 246.

22 Ibid., 232.

23 Ibid., 233.

24 Ibid., 309.

25 Ibid.

even by myself,²⁶ that I will not belabor its problems here, but a brief but well done critique I commend to my students to give to any of their parishioners still disturbed by that novel is Hank Hanegraaff and Paul L. Maier's concise *The Da Vinci Code: Fact Or Fiction?* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2004). Other longer books, of course, have merit, and will reward more serious scholars in your congregation, but I should warn you that you may want to screen some of these before handing them on, as a few of them are so replete themselves with a higher critical take on the New Testament documents that they may do your parishioners' biblical views harm as they are doing their belief in the orthodox doctrines good.

The Da Vinci Code author, Dan Brown, like Michael Baigent, of course, is less interested in Jesus' fate (death on the cross appears to work for him) and more focused on Christ's supposed descendants, retaining the French felon's spurious claims and spinning out a wild and salacious tale, full of those wonderful puzzles, that terrible history, and abysmal theology, where, as heir of that mythical, x-rated "early Jewish tradition," Jesus is ultimately portrayed in the novel as the high priest of a goddess cult. This ridiculous idea, of course, was not completely original with Dan Brown. The novelist D.H. Lawrence published a novelette back in 1928 called *The Man Who Died* that posited Jesus survives the crucifixion, hooks up with a priestess of Isis, acknowledges, "All men praise thee, Isis, thou greater than the mother unto man."²⁷ Jesus then impregnates the priestess (hence the wife and child motif), but turns out to be a dead-beat dad, rowing off to oblivion in a stolen boat.

But the idea that Jesus survived the crucifixion was not original with Lawrence either, because the German rationalist Venturini had the same idea (albeit *sans* priestess, Isis, offspring, child abandonment, and grand theft of nautical equipment). According to him, Jesus fainted on the cross and revived in the cool of the tomb.²⁸ Then, despite his extensive wounds, he presumably broke out, managing to break the seals and move the sealing stone, elude the guards, and limp away, which was quite a day's work for a man recently whipped, beaten, crucified, and speared.

The 19th century German skeptic David Strauss, himself a pantheist with a "monistic" "immanent" identification of God with the world,²⁹ who "set out to write a destructive critique of the biblical and doctrinal views of Christ"³⁰ by questioning every part of the New Testament reports of Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and ascension, explains rationalists of his day held a similar theory, but despite his own agnosticism rejects it:

Jesus, we are told, seeing no other way of purifying the prevalent messianic idea from the admixture of material and political hopes, exposed himself to crucifixion, but in doing so relied on the possibility of procuring a speedy removal from the cross by early bowing his head, and of being afterwards restored by the medical skill of some among his secret colleagues; so as to inspire the people at the same time by the appearance of a resurrection. Others have at least exonerated Jesus from such contrivance, and have admitted that he really sank into a deathlike slumber; but have ascribed to his disciples a preconceived plan of producing apparent death by means of a potion, and thus by occasioning his early removal from the cross, securing his restoration to life. But of all this our evangelical sources give no intimation, and for conjecturing such details we have no ground. Judicious friends of the natural explanation, who repudiate such monstrous productions of a system which remodels

²⁶ See my editorial in *Priscilla Papers*, vol. 21, no. 1 (Winter 2007), 2-3.

²⁷ See D.H. Lawrence, "The Man Who Died," in *St. Mawr* and *The Man Who Died* (New York, NY: Vintage, 1953), 195.

²⁸ Frank Morison (pseud. of Albert Henry Ross), *Who Moved the Stone?* (London: Faber & Faber, 1930), 96.

²⁹ Peter C. Hodgson, "Editor's Introduction," in David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1972), xlv.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, xvi.

history at will, have hence renounced the supposition of any remains of conscious life in Jesus, and have contented themselves, for the explanation of his revivification, with the vital force which remained in his still young and vigorous body, even after the cessation of consciousness; and have pointed out, instead of premeditated tendence by the hands of men, the beneficial influence which the partly oleaginous substances applied to his body must have had in promoting the healing of his wounds, and, united with the air in the cave, impregnated with the perfumes of the spices, in reawakening feeling and consciousness in Jesus; to all which was added as a decisive impulse, the earthquake and the lightning which on the morning of the resurrection opened the grave of Jesus.³¹

He also points out an opposing viewpoint prevalent in his day:

Others have remarked, in opposition to this, that the cold air in the cave must have had anything rather than a vivifying tendency; that strong aromatics in a confined space would rather have had a stupefying and stifling influence; and the same effect must have been produced by a flash of lightning bursting into the grave, if this were not a mere figment of rationalistic expositors.³²

But this “monstrous production” that “remodels history” by claiming Jesus was only half-dead and plotting to survive his crucifixion and simulate a resurrection did not originate with Strauss’s contemporaries. We can trace it all the way back to the brilliant pagan apologist Celsus, who wrote his polemics against Christianity c. C.E. 178-80. Among the literary devices he employed in his attack was the construction of a fictional Jew through whom he could deliver his objections in order to recall Christians to what he considered a more acceptable religion than Christianity, the Judaism which provided its background. Much of Celsus’ argumentation, we will note, is either summarized or directly quoted in Origen’s (c. C.E. 185-255) response to his attack. In one such summary, Origen writes:

Celsus’ Jew says that the heroic stories about the men alleged to have descended to Hades and returned from there are fantastic tales, and thinks that the heroes disappeared for a time and took themselves off secretly from the sight of all men, and after that showed themselves as though they had returned from Hades.³³

Origen responds to Celsus’ application of this argument to Jesus’ case:

This also might be an additional reason why his death on the cross was a public event, that no one may be able to say that he deliberately retired out of sight of men, and that although he appeared to die he did not really do so, but, when he wanted to, again reappeared and told the portentous tale that he had risen from the dead. But I think that clear and certain proof is the argument from the behaviour of the disciples, who devoted themselves to a teaching which involved risking their lives.³⁴

Origen here hammers at the weak point at that center of Celsus’ wall of doubt: the remarkable change in the attitude of Jesus’ followers. Their behavioral change is an aspect we see proffered as proof or maligned as myth again and again.

All of this theorizing, of course, assumes that Jesus after the crucifixion was only “half dead,” therefore, the question we need to ask is: Was Jesus indeed “half-dead?”

31 Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 737-38.

32 Ibid., 738.

33 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), book 2, section 56 (110).

34 Ibid., 2.56.

Was Jesus Only Half-dead?

Today, we have what are called “near-death experiences,” that we have all heard about – or perhaps either you or someone you know has actually experienced. Such a medical phenomenon takes place when someone is pronounced dead, but not necessarily clinically dead in every aspect, including brain dead, and they resuscitate and reanimate.

People in Jesus’ day had a similar principle. With three days deceased and in the tomb, they were willing to consider the dead completely and thoroughly dead. The spirit – that part which makes each of us unique and maintains like a gold reserve the concept of eternity in our mind – was recognized as having definitely emptied out so that by the fourth day deep mourning for the permanent loss would then take place.

In the account about Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead, as told in the Gospel of John chapter 11, when Jesus orders the stone before his tomb to be removed, Martha, Lazarus’ sister, who understood this definition of complete death, tries to warn Jesus off. She says in 11:39: “Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.” With three days he was dead; with four he was putrid.

Jesus himself was pronounced dead – we might say officially dead – at the cross, but he stayed in the tomb for three days, Friday, when he dies, Saturday, the day after, into Sunday morning, when he is brought back to life by God, his heavenly Father, and leaves the tomb. The time lapse, built, as it is, on his Old Testament reference to Jonah’s experience in the fish (Matt 12:40), might also be demonstrating that he is, indeed, clinically dead, but the appearance they see is a resurrection, not the manifestation of a ghost floating about. In other words, with three days rather than four days, he is not putrid, his spirit is still connected to his transformed body in their understanding. He has, indeed, conquered death, which was unable to hold him into disintegration.

In addition, his disciple John, who stood at the foot of his cross and was given Jesus’ mother to care for, reports: When the soldiers who were breaking the legs of those crucified with Jesus came to Jesus, they “saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out” (John 19:32-34).

This data is very puzzling for Dr. Schonfield, whom I mentioned earlier. He reflects, “Much would depend on the nature of the wound. The reported emission of blood shows at least that life was still in him.”³⁵ But, you notice, he has misquoted John’s words, missing both their context and their significance. The context is Roman executioners. These soldiers who routinely saw dead people, in fact, who routinely made dead people, certainly were able to recognize official death without being mistaken. The significance of John’s words is that they drove a spear into Jesus’ side so that, had he been alive, he would have bled to death: clinical death.

Further, despite Strauss’s objection that, had the spear pierced Jesus’ pericardium, so that the fluid flowed out rather than into “the cavity of the thorax,” the amount still would have been “so trifling, that its emission would not be perceptible,”³⁶ an actual doctor, William Stroud, M.D., in his classic text, *Treatise on the Physical Cause of the Death of Christ*, does indeed confirm “that rupture of the heart” would cause “immediate death” and “effusion into the pericardium,” separating the blood “into its constituent parts, so as to present the appearance commonly termed blood and water.”³⁷ Sir Alexander Simpson also reports “he had examined several cases ‘in which the pericardial bag was greatly distended and the blood had separated into clot and watery serum.’”³⁸ The two liquids were certainly obvious to these two observers, and how else would a

35 Schonfield, *The Passover Plot*, 168.

36 Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 698.

37 Cited in Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 819.

38 Ibid.

trained soldier, whose task was to assure death, dispatch a victim, but by driving his spear into the heart? And all this is reported by one who was standing at the scene of the actual event, who wrote his book in Ephesus near the end of the first century, and who affirms, “He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth” (John 19:35). In addition, Pilate released the corpse to Joseph of Arimathea, who, along with Nicodemus and several women, buries it in his own tomb and seals it up. Once the death sentence was passed, Pilate would not have authorized the release of a condemned criminal still alive after execution.

Despite Michael Baigent’s fanciful reconstruction of a corrupt and greedy procurator paid off to look the other way, the real Pontius Pilate’s patrician personality is revealed not only in the Bible but in other historical records, for example, in Josephus’ *The Wars of the Jews*, where Pilate provokes the Jews cruelly, ordering Caesar’s images to be brought by night into Jerusalem, violating the commandment against images, spending sacred temple money “called Corban upon aqueducts,” and having his soldiers beat with clubs those who protested (see 2.9.2-4),³⁹ and in Eusebius’ *The History of the Church*, 2.7, where Pilate is reported to have caused “such calamities that he was forced to become his own executioner and to punish himself with his own hand” by the emperor Gaius.⁴⁰ The skeptical scholar Hugh Schonfield, who understands the real Pontius Pilate, observes:

Pilate cared nothing about Jesus. He did care about his own position if he should be accused to Tiberius of fomenting disaffection by executing a Jew on unsupported testimony. At Rome they did not take kindly these days to provocative action in the Provinces, and the governor was already in trouble enough because of the disturbances resulting from his flouting of Jewish customs. What decided him finally to give way was the threat of an even more sinister accusation: “If you free the man you are no friend of Caesar’s. Whoever claims to be a king is in opposition to Caesar.”⁴¹

Pilate would hardly have undercut his already tenuous position by jeopardizing it further with either a Temple pay-off or a supporter of Jesus bribe (especially being disposed, as we saw, to demonstrate he could take Temple money, or any Jewish money, whenever he wished). Rather, as the spear thrust indicates, the Romans were making certain Jesus was one disturber of their peace who would disturb no more.

Thus, Jesus was recognized by all who handled his corpse as completely and totally dead: battered, stabbed, and bloodless and not about to lurk three days in a cold stone tomb, sealed and presumably without fresh airflow, and therefore suffocating, then burst out of his wrappings, push away the huge sealed stone, overpower a patrol of professional guards – or even sneak past them, if the rolling stone did not wake them up – stroll around the garden, and pop out on Mary on Easter Morning, yelling, “Surprise!”

By eyewitness report and modern medical confirmation of the data recorded, we can establish that Jesus was, indeed, dead: killed beyond a shadow of a doubt on a Roman cross.

This, then, raises the second objection: Did he actually come back to life?

³⁹ Josephus, “The Wars of the Jews” in William Whiston, trans., *The Works of Josephus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987).

⁴⁰ Several helpful translations are available, such as, Eusebius, *The Church History*, trans. Paul Maier (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1999), Eusebius, *The History of the Church*, trans. G.A. Williamson and Andrew Louth (London: Penguin, 1989). The Greek and English are available side by side in the two volume Loeb Classical Library edition: Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Kirsopp Lake and J.E.L. Oulton (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1926, 1930). The translation I include here is from the G.A. Williamson and Andrew Louth edition.

⁴¹ Schonfield, *The Passover Plot*, 153.

Did Jesus Resurrect?

To address this second issue, if this were a court of law, we would need to summon witnesses to the stand.⁴² In New Testament times, the law required the testimony of two or three witnesses before any charge or claim was taken seriously. You will find this provision listed in that penal code, Deuteronomy, section 17, subsection 6. In the Apostle Paul's disposition to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 15), he not only fulfills this requirement, but exceeds it, presenting the testimony of Peter, Jesus' right-hand man, and James the Just One, who was universally respected for his wisdom and had come to be called "the Righteous One" and "Bulwark of the People."⁴³ He also subpoenas, so to say, ten more of Jesus' disciples, 500 others, and, finally, presents himself as an eyewitness (1 Cor. 15:5-8). While the Jewish court of law did not ordinarily put women on the stand, the four gospel writers break precedent by citing several respected women who were also present at the event, as well as other witnesses (e.g. Luke 24:13-35).

What is remarkable is that every one of these mentioned, Paul included, is a very unlikely witness to be testifying on behalf of Jesus:

*Peter, for instance, has become infamous as a deserter. When Jesus was arrested, Peter was so afraid of being arrested himself he quaked in front of a servant girl, swearing he did not even know Jesus (Matt. 26:69-74). Yet, something turned him around.

*James the Just never believed in Jesus during Jesus' lifetime. He admits mocking him during the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2-7), thinking he was insane (Matt 12:46-50). Jesus had to reply, "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house" (trans. by author), meaning by that among his own family and his neighbors. But, here stood James' testimony, swearing that Jesus was alive.

*Those two travelers on that seven mile road (Luke 24:13) from Jerusalem to Emmaus who were discussing the tragedy certainly did not expect to discuss it with the risen victim himself! So far was that thought from their minds that they walked miles with Jesus without recognizing him (Luke 24:13-35).

*Mary Magdalene, Salome, Mary, the mother of another James, and any other women with them who went to visit the tomb on that Easter morning certainly had no expectations of a resurrection. In fact, it is recorded, "They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?'" (Mark 16:3) They were coming to treat a corpse.

*Jesus' eleven disciples were obviously not expecting Jesus to reappear after he was executed, since they were hiding in terror. And, when he did appear to them, Thomas, who happened to be absent, demanded to be given empirical evidence. He contended – and this is on record – "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe" (John 20:25).

*That statement was recorded by an eyewitness to the event and has become so well known in our time that we have made a cliché of it: We call skeptical people "Doubting Thomases!"

*And - speaking of doubt, or more accurately out-and-out hostility - Paul himself was so certain the resurrection was a scam he went out persecuting this movement with zeal until he got knocked off his ride outside Damascus by being confronted with Jesus himself!

42 There have been various attempts to examine the evidence surrounding Jesus' death and resurrection from a legal standpoint, from classic studies by lawyers like "Colonel Alexander S. Bacon of the New York Bar" in his *The Illegal Trial of Christ* and journalist Albert Henry Ross under the pseudonym Frank Morison in *Who Moved the Stone?* on through Joslin "Josh" McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (for which, along with his other apologetic books and activities, he received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Simon Greenleaf School of Law [now Trinity Law School] in 1982) to recent innovative works as Charles Foster's *The Jesus Inquest*, which features two fictional lawyers arguing the pro and con cases for the resurrection, and Ross Clifford's round-up of Christian lawyers' defenses of the resurrection: *Leading Lawyers' Case for the Resurrection* (also see, *The Case for the Empty Tomb*, aka *Leading Lawyers Look at the Resurrection*).

43 Eusebius, *History of the Church*, Book 2, section 23.

So, who were they - these witnesses who testified to the resurrection of Jesus? A deserter, some skeptics, a hostile critic. That is, they were those things until they all changed dramatically. Something happened to them. And what a change it made!

Consider: One minute Peter is silenced by a slave girl, the next minute he is testifying before the high court of law, the Sanhedrin, declaring firmly that Jesus had come back to life (see Acts 4:3-22). And it was not just one of his temporary vacillations. He stayed steadfast until his own execution. The report that Clement from the late 100s heard was this:

They say that when the blessed Peter saw his wife led away to death, he rejoiced that her call had come and that she was returning home. He called out to her by name in encouragement and comfort, "Remember the Lord!" Such was the marriage of the blessed and their perfect affection.⁴⁴

He could not deny what his own eyes had seen.

We should also consider the lesson of James. Josephus, the great historian, tells us that, when James was executed by the authorities for his belief in Jesus, the citizens were so outraged by the murder of one so exemplary in goodness that the persecution was stopped by the local business and professional community.⁴⁵ The change in James was due to his unswerving conviction that he had seen Jesus alive. And that made him a model of goodness among the people. He chose death rather than denial that Jesus had indeed risen from the grave.

Paul's own change is no less dramatic. One Professor Weinstein, a brilliant Jewish professor with whom I had the privilege to study western civilization years ago when I was in college at Rutgers University, explained to us students that, though he considered himself agnostic, he realized that the change in a man as brilliant and respectable as Paul gave credibility to the claims of Christianity. Paul was, after all, a student of one of the most educated and distinguished religious educators of his time, Rabbi Gamaliel. The remarkable transformation in his perspective, given his intellectual caliber, this professor thought, was the greatest defense of Christianity and the reason no true historian could simply dismiss its claims and set Christianity aside, but must grapple with what it avows is true: that Jesus actually did arise from death. Here again among the wise we see referenced the behavioral change that Origen noted that has so confounded those who doubt the records.

And, if such transformed witnesses were not enough, Paul submits 500 more eyewitnesses that would flood a courtroom – all claiming they saw Jesus alive after death and staking their own lives on their undeniable experience.

Something turned all of them around from being cringing cowards or hostile critics to champions whose depositions are still turning the world upside down. What happened? All of them declared they saw God in the Person of Jesus Christ conquer death, and they took that unwavering conviction to the grave with them.

That is why, after seeing such sincerity, most people – even the über-skeptic Strauss - have recognized that these eyewitnesses did indeed believe something actually happened. But those who still wonder what exactly that something was have raised certain alternative explanations for their convictions.

Were the Resurrection Appearances Hallucinations?

The seminal critic Celsus, with what seems to me to be a somewhat misogynist argument, writes of Jesus:

While he was alive he did not help himself, but after death he rose again and showed the marks of his punishment and how his hands had been pierced. But who saw this? A

⁴⁴ Clement, *Miscellanies*, Book 7, quoted in Eusebius, *History*, 3.30.

⁴⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20, cited in Eusebius, *History*, 2.23.

hysterical female, as you say, and perhaps some other one of those who were deluded by the same sorcery, who either dreamt in a certain state of mind and through wishful thinking had a hallucination due to some mistaken notion (an experience which has happened to thousands), or, which is more likely, wanted to impress the others by telling this fantastic tale, and so by this cock-and-bull story to provide a chance for other beggars.⁴⁶

Editor Peter Hodgson notes that, for David Strauss too, “the appearances of the crucified Jesus to the disciples are subjective visions or hallucinations, which may be interpreted psychologically as instances of primitive Christian enthusiasm.”⁴⁷ Strauss himself seemed to echo Celsus, whom he references in his work,⁴⁸ when he suggests of the memories of Jesus: “How conceivable is it that in individuals, especially women, these impressions were heightened, in a purely subjective manner, into actual vision; that on others, even on whole assemblies, something or other of an objective nature, visible or audible, sometimes perhaps the sight of an unknown person, created the impression of a revelation or appearance of Jesus[?]”⁴⁹

Of course, such a supposition need not remain in the realm of speculation as it is a testable hypothesis.

The Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy lists several causes for hallucinations: the first is alcoholic, which I believe we can rule out, since we have no report of a Philogenes cleaning up an excess of wineskins in the garden. “In delirium” is the second listed cause, “visual hallucinations” occurring “with acute widespread toxic or structural brain disease” and “seen especially during withdrawal” from substance abuse or “ingestion of drugs such as LSD or marijuana,” and “in acute inflammatory disorders such as encephalitis or meningitis, and occasionally with large right hemispheric parietal occipital infarcts in the elderly” (that is, dying or dead brain tissue around the occipital bone near the top and side of the skull).⁵⁰ An interesting side note is that, during the years I was doing my research on the Rastafarians’ view of Jesus, I would occasionally encounter one who claimed in all sincerity that the apostles all smoked the holy herb and, therefore, the resurrection appearances of both Jesus and Haile Selassie I, after they “translated,” were due to the inspiration of ganja’s psychoactive ingredient delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol, one Rasta citing the “sound like the rush of a violent wind” (the noise of smoking) and the “divided tongues, as of fire” (the glow of a spliff) around each of the believers’ heads in Acts 2:2-3 as proof!⁵¹

“Hypnagogic phenomena” is listed next, meaning hallucinations come on “at the onset of sleep or, less often, on awakening, and are difficult to distinguish from intense reverie. These are somewhat similar to vivid dreams occurring in normal REM sleep.”⁵²

The fourth cause listed is during “bi-polar illness” “in the full-blown manic psychosis,” wherein “fleeting auditory and visual hallucinations are sometimes present,” occurring “at the height of mania.” At this advanced stage, physicians are warned that patients are approaching

46 Quoted by Origen in *Contra Celsum*, 2.55.

47 Hodgson, “Editor’s Introduction,” in David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, xxxiv.

48 Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 738.

49 Ibid., 742.

50 Robert Berkow, M.D., ed. in chief, *The Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy*, 15th ed. (Rahway, NJ: Merck Sharp & Dohme Research Laboratories, 1987), 1335, 1548.

51 Those who are interested in exploring the data from my twenty-three years of research on the Rastafarian movement, this offshoot of Christianity that exercises so much global influence, especially on the young, and particularly on college campuses in the United States and worldwide, due to the impact of reggae music, may consult my book on the Rasta view of Jesus Christ: *Dread Jesus* (London: SPCK, 1999) (which is available in North America in a new edition from Wipf and Stock). For a general introduction to Rastafari, its religion, politics, sociology, etc., in a book used in many universities and termed the “definitive” multi-author work in the field, please consult the volume I co-edited with Nathaniel Samuel Murrell and Adrian Anthony McFarlane: *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1998).

52 Ibid., 1379.

“delirious mania,” which “constitutes a medical emergency, as patients may die from sheer physical exhaustion.”⁵³

The final entry is in schizophrenia, wherein we are told “auditory hallucinations are the most common, but hallucinations of sight, touch (including sexual sensations), smell, and taste may occur...especially hallucinations of a running commentary on the patient’s actions or of voices talking about the patient.”⁵⁴

Now let us test our eyewitnesses against these categories. Peter in Acts 2:15 defends the disciples against the Pentecost crowd’s conclusion that they must be drunk, pointing out it was “only nine o’clock in the morning,” when the Holy Spirit came upon them. The early church was equally careful to insist its leadership was “not indulging in much wine” at any hour, as Paul counseled Timothy (1 Tim. 3:2-3, 8). It is hardly likely all the women, the disciples, Paul on the road to Damascus, and the 500 witnesses were the victims of an “all night party,” especially during the period of mourning for Jesus, which coincided with his forty days of appearances. Were they all stoned, senile, half asleep, deliriously manic, schizophrenic? No, those cited are such hard-headed individuals as a tax collector, a number of workaday fisher folk, and other laborers with a wide variety of dispositions, not the highly-strung, morbidly imaginative, and unbalanced people *The Merck Manual* describes. Among such, hallucinations are highly individualistic, produced as they are by an individual’s sub-conscious. But, for the individual subconscious of 500 different people to come up with the same vision collectively, and, in the case of the disciples, at the same time, is not plausible.

Further, this was hardly an expected event, driven by “primitive Christian enthusiasm,” as Hodgson puts it. The resurrection of Jesus was not imagined by this beaten little band, cowering in a locked room with their hopes shattered. For normal people, in a somewhat somnolent state, as the hypnagogic condition would entail, usually, hallucinations occur at dusk, in twilight, or among the pre-dawn shadows, when people are drowsy. But, the appearance on the road to Emmaus took place over a several mile walk throughout an afternoon (see Luke 24:13ff). The one at the sea was during morning work hours, the text specifying “after daybreak” (John 21:1ff., trans. by author). The appearance to Thomas was in a room with the doors securely shut and a number of people standing about (John 20:26-29). Usually, too, for chronic hallucinogenic types, visions tend to occur over a long period of time. But the resurrection appearances lasted only forty days and then, except for Paul’s experience, they were largely over.

In fact, so far from plausible is the possibility of hallucination as the explanation of the resurrection appearances of Jesus that even a critic of the veracity of the event like Hugh Schonfield rejects this explanation, as he concludes:

We are not dealing in the Gospels with hallucinations, with psychic phenomena or survival in the Spiritualist sense. These possibilities do not fit the circumstances as they are narrated. However the traditions of the resurrection of Jesus are to be explained it cannot legitimately be on these lines.⁵⁵

I have noticed at times in some of the literature, as is true with so many controversial topics, that terms and suppositions are simply tossed about, even by respected scholars, as if introducing a label like “hallucination” somehow answers the issue or provides an explanation. To me it simply

⁵³ Ibid., 1519.

⁵⁴ 1534-35.

⁵⁵ Schonfield, *The Passover Plot*, 159. Strangely, though, having said this, he does indeed entertain a spiritualist solution twenty pages later, when he writes: “There is room for other theories, such as that the man concerned, if there was but one, was a medium, and that Jesus, risen from the dead into the After Life in the Spiritualist sense, spoke through him in his own voice, which enabled his presence to be recognised. Too little is told, and that little quickly became too legendary, and too contradictory, for any assured conclusion,” 179-80.

begs a question. And, as in this case, not all that is claimed in such a cavalier manner stands up under scrutiny when one pauses to examine the conditions and limits with which the term applies.

But, perhaps the problem is with the nomenclature. Perhaps Hodgson was wrong, and what Strauss and those like him were actually groping for was not an hallucination, but more precisely cognitive dissonance. Maybe their claim is that the apostles wanted so much for Jesus to be back among them they decided it had to have happened. It was intense wishful thinking, as we saw Celsus suggest.

Were the Appearances of Jesus Actually the Result of Cognitive Dissonance?

Gordon Kaufman, who published a systematic theology attempting to address the God-Is-Dead movement in the 1960s (one of whose adherents, Thomas J.J. Altizer, resurfaced as an architect of the theological adaptation of the Deconstruction movement), has interpreted the resurrection through the lens of dissonance. He is perhaps the best proponent of this theory. Appearing to adapt the language we saw in Celsus (“through wishful thinking had a hallucination”), Prof. Kaufman decides the “‘resurrection of Jesus,’ does not refer to an experienced event but to a hypothetical one...these alleged appearances were in fact a series of hallucinations produced by the wishful thinking of Jesus’ former disciples who had so strongly hoped and believed ‘that he was the one to redeem Israel.’”⁵⁶ He adds:

In this respect, perhaps the naive superstition of a group of first-century Galilean fishermen had a real advantage over modern naive skepticism, and one might consider it providential that God’s definitive act occurred two thousand years ago instead of today. For at that time it was possible for hallucinations to convince men that Jesus was really raised from the dead; and thus a church could be founded and a tradition well enough established to enable even men of the modern skeptical age to believe. Contemporary belief, of course, will not necessarily involve the conviction that the crucified Jesus became personally alive again; rather, it will see the events of Jesus’ ministry and death – especially as appropriated through that strange event called the “resurrection” – as the actual establishment of the kingdom of God...the founding of a new community of love in which the purposes of God for human history are being realized and the anarchy of human history is being overcome through God’s power and love.⁵⁷

When one assesses this claim from the pivotal period between the end of modernity and the beginning of post-modernity, one appreciates the balancing of ancient and modern naïveté in Kaufman’s presentation, despite the fact that his thinking is still couched in that ahistorical mode of Rudolf Bultmann⁵⁸ that assumes first century people were more superstitious than those of the

⁵⁶ Gordon D. Kaufman, *Systematic Theology: A Historicist Perspective* (New York, NY: Scribner’s, 1968), 422.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 425-26.

⁵⁸ See Bultmann’s essay “New Testament and Mythology: The Problem of Demythologizing the New Testament Proclamation” in *New Testament and Mythology and Other Basic Writings*, trans. Schubert M. Ogden (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984) for, perhaps, his best delineation of how “the world of the New Testament is a mythical world picture. The world is a three-story structure, with earth in the middle, heaven above it, and hell below it,” and why “we cannot use electric lights and radios...and at the same time believe” in it (1,4). Obviously, Bultmann missed the work of reputed psychologists and psychiatrists who were his contemporaries like Dr. K. Schmeing (*Second Vision in Nether Germany – The Core of the Reality* [Leipzig: Ambrosius Barth, 1937]), T.K. Oesterreich (*Die Besessenheit* [Langensalza: Wendt & Klauwell, 1921]), Rudolf Tishner (*Ergebnisse okkultur Forschung* [Stuttgart: Deutsche, 1951]), Hans Driesch, *Parapsychologie. Die Wissenschaft von den ‘okkulten’ Erscheinungen, Methodik und Theorie* [Munich: Bruckmann, 1932]), among scores of others who studied white magic being practiced among Germany’s shepherds, telepathy, second sight, apparitions of the dead, etc. Readers can find an analysis of this extensive work with the preternatural in Germany in Lutheran psychologist Kurt Koch’s *Christian Counseling and Occultism: The Christian Counseling of Persons Who Are Psychically Vexed or Ailing Because of Involvement in Occultism (A Practical, Theological and Systematic Investigation in Consultation With Medical and Psychological Bordering Sciences)*, trans. Andrew Petter (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1965). One can also contrast Bultmann’s understanding of the early church mind with Origen’s complaint about Celsus, that in “accepting the legends

present age – that is to say, being gullible, pre-scientific ancients, they would be fooled by fantasy in a way contemporaries would not. This indicates that, for Kaufman, who sub-titles his book “a historicist perspective,” an historicist is not necessarily an historian. According to Webster’s dictionary, “historicism” is “a theory that history is determined by immutable laws and not by human agency... all cultural phenomena are historically determined and that historians must study each period without imposing any personal or absolute value system...a search for laws of historical evolution that would explain and predict historical phenomena,”⁵⁹ as opposed to the more modest definition of “history”: “the branch of knowledge dealing with past events...a systematic account of any set of natural phenomena without particular reference to time.”⁶⁰ One need only review Celsus’ dogged insistence that the dead do not rise⁶¹ with the reactions of non-recognition, consternation, disbelief of Jesus’ followers to see the disjuncture. Set that, then, within the context of current Salem, Massachusetts, which Hamilton alumni will remember from their student days, with its haunted houses, its ghost walks, its tarot card readers and magic shops, and the thousands of witches that live in its environs and gather at Samhein and full moons, and one can easily see how locked into the modernist, Kantian/Schleiermacherian, Troeltschian-Bultmannian mindset is Kaufman’s thinking. To be truly “a historicist” (assuming the modernist myth that objective scholarship is actually possible), Kaufman would have to approach the early church without “imposing any personal or absolute value system” on it. However, his perspective is Kantian/Schleiermacherian in pre-supposing that God’s activity is not available to empirical analysis (so he must discount a testimony like 1 John 1:1);

invented by the Greeks [e.g. “Beneath that land is the land of Tartarus, and it is guarded by the daughters of Boreas, the Harpies and Thyella; there Zeus casts out any of the gods if ever one becomes arrogant”] he goes on to attack our doctrines” (Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 359), as he tries to explain the difference between the New Testament perspective and the pagan worldviews. Justin Martyr in *The First Apology* (c. 138-156 C.E.) also contrasts pagan and Christian beliefs, while cleverly appealing to pagan myths to convince his hearers that life after death is possible: “Look back on the end of each of the past emperors, and consider how they died the death common to all men, which, if it led to a state of insensibility, would be a godsend for all sinners. But, since a state of sensibility does await all those who were alive and since eternal punishment awaits the wicked, be convinced and believe that these statements are true. Indeed, let the oracles of the dead and the sorcery you perform through innocent children, and the invoking of the souls of the dead, let those whom the magicians call dream-sending and familiar spirits, and let whatever else is performed by those skilled in such arts convince you that even after death souls remain in a state of sensibility. Be convinced, likewise, by those possessed and tormented by the souls of the deceased, whom everyone calls demoniacs and madmen, and by what you call the oracles of Amphilochus, Dodona, Apollo, and of others like them, and by the teaching of the writers Empedocles and Pythagoras, Plato and Socrates, and by the ditch of Homer, and by the descent of Ulysses to see the dead, and by those who told similar stories. Treat us, therefore, in a similar manner as you treat them, for we believe in God not less, but more than they do, since we expect that our own bodies, even though they should be dead and buried in the earth, will be revived; for we claim that nothing is impossible with God” (18, the translation I am citing is by Thomas B. Falls in *The Writings of Saint Justin Martyr* [Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1948], 52-54). One can also consider Augustine’s argument that God is not tied down to a space or place. The heavens are mere physical bodies similar in that respect to ours, and, therefore, the New Testament writers cannot mean that God is located somewhere in the sky or else the birds would live out their lives nearer to God than humans do (see his *The Lord’s Sermon on the Mount*, 5.17). Tertullian went as far as to speculate “we are ‘heaven’ and ‘earth’” (*On Prayer* 4). The Renaissance, we should remember, was rediscovering ancient wisdom in mathematics, literature, even rudimentary science (e.g. calculating the circumference of the earth), et al. Therefore, the point I made earlier applies here: that the ancients, though pre-scientific in the contemporary sense, were not all so much more gullible to imagine the dead return and walk abroad in vaster measure than are many of my neighbors in occult-influenced Massachusetts. Readers who are interested in more of my thoughts on this and related topics may see my discussion in chapter 2 of my wife’s and my book *The Prayer Life of Jesus* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990); the Augustine and Tertullian quotations I cite here are included on page 16. For more of my thoughts on the contribution of Julius Africanus and my wife’s and my critiques of approaches to the Bible similar to those I have discussed in this article, please see our individual articles in the inaugural issue of *The Africanus Journal*, 1.1. For our further thoughts on the contemporary resurgence of the occult and neo-paganism, please see our book *The Goddess Revival: A Biblical Response to God(dess) Spirituality*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010), which includes chapters by G.C.T.S’s Catherine Clark Kroeger and Donna Hailson, an authority on new religious movements.

⁵⁹ Random House, *Random House Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary* (New York, NY: Random House Reference, 2001), 907.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ “But we must examine this question whether anyone who really died ever rose again with the same body,” quoted in Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 2.57.

Troeltschian in his adherence to a law of relativity⁶² (a type of uniformity of nature principle) which seeks to naturalize any interaction God is reported to have taken in the world; Bultmannian in his age-ism, positing such sheer innocence and naïve gullibility in regard to the first century, as opposed to the modern, mind. What is salvageable is that Kaufman does affirm God exists and speaks and acts through “visions and voices,”⁶³ although, for him God’s act-time and the realm of real empirical experience do not converge to the point that Jesus rose from the dead.

At any rate, what should interest us here is the notion that the “hallucination” under question is produced in the otherwise normal mind by intense “wishful thinking,” in other words, not being produced by the morbid causes of hallucination we examined earlier, but being the occurrence we call “cognitive dissonance.”

Again, this theory is testable. The classic textbook case of cognitive dissonance involves a well-publicized UFO cult examined by L. Festinger, H. Riecken and S. Schachter, psychologists who infiltrated the group in 1956.⁶⁴ They report the leader, one Mrs. Keech, predicted the end of the world was at hand. Her followers gathered one night in great expectancy to be taken away by a spaceship right before the world’s destruction. Tension mounted and then – at the penultimate doomsday moment when rescue was to take place – nothing happened. And when neither succor nor destruction occurred, the adherents suddenly went out proclaiming that their faith had just averted the danger and saved the world!

In Mark’s record, of course, we see exactly the opposite conditions. The women are bringing spices to the tomb to anoint Jesus’ body and wondering who would remove the stone for them. The last thing they expected was for that body they were about to anoint to be alive. They were astounded. In fact, Mark, in whose home the last supper probably took place, reports they “went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid” (Mark 16:8, trans. by author). And, indeed, those women who did speak found their report was not initially believed by the disciples.

Clearly, the UFO proclaimers differed from the disciples in that none of them appeared to be a Thomas, since not one of them was reported to have told Mrs. Keech, “Look, Lady, I won’t believe your story until I shake hand to tentacle with one of your aliens!”

As opposed to these gullible modern believers, none of Jesus’ disciples were anticipating his return. The last thing they envisioned was Jesus, who was clearly dead, now fully recovered and marvelously restored and confronting them in glorious life. In fact, they had even gone back to their former occupations, apparently considering this chapter in their young lives completed with the death of their leader (see John 21:3).

What they did discover, according to their own reports, in the morning work hours at their jobsite at the Sea of Galilee, however, was not rumor, not a hallucination, not the result of cognitive dissonance. So, if their claims were not built on simply intense wishful thinking, the related question I would be asking if I were an attorney - and you should be asking too - concerns perjury. This is Celsus’ preferred choice, as we recall, the “more likely...cock-and-bull” “fantastic tale” spun out by those who “wanted to impress the others.” In short, is it possible they were all lying?

Could This Be a Deliberate Invention: Something the Disciples Made Up?

If the report of the appearances of Jesus was a well orchestrated lie on the part of over a half thousand people, the conspiracy would have to work like this: Immediately after Joseph of

62 I have always wondered, by the way, how something dealing in the relative can be a “law.”

63 Kaufman, *Systematic Theology: A Historicist Perspective*, 425.

64 Their 1956 study, *When Prophecy Fails*, from the University of Minnesota Press, is analyzed in Gregory A. Kimble and Norman Garmezy, *Principles of General Psychology*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Ronald, 1963), see pages 591-94. I notice N.T. Wright also references this study in his discussion of cognitive dissonance in *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 697-701.

Arimathea and Nicodemus and Mary Magdalene and the one identified as “the other Mary” (John 27:61), who stood watch, had buried Jesus, and before the chief priests and Pharisees set a guard, since they feared, in their words, “his disciples may go and steal him away, and tell the people, ‘He has been raised from the dead,’ and the last deception would be worse than the first” (see Matt 27:57-66), the disciples would have had to have done just what the Sanhedrin feared – go and steal the body and then fake a resurrection. It is interesting to note, by the way, that, even if the disciples did not comprehend that Jesus had been preparing them for his death and resurrection, apparently the brighter minds of the Sanhedrin leaders had apprehended Jesus’ message and were guarding against a ruse by his disciples to bring about its fulfillment by deception.

Today, this is the stuff of which conspiracy theories are made, for example, a central facet of a book, *The Jesus Family Tomb: The Discovery, the Investigation, and the Evidence That Could Change History* (hereafter JFT), by a Canadian journalist and an independent archaeologist who had searched for Atlantis. Produced just in time for Easter with an accompanying documentary film on the Discovery Channel by Hollywood heavyweight James Cameron, who directed such movies as *The Terminator*, *The Titanic*, and *Avatar*, this visual and literary one-two combination attempts to prove that a grave discovered some three decades ago, in 1980, is the actual tomb of Jesus and contains his bones. The result is not a cheap shot, in my estimation, but a sincere and honest exploration by starry-eyed filmmakers who have no actual training in biblical studies and who have become excited over circumstantial data that the tomb’s official excavators considered insignificant. In fact, James Cameron contends in the introduction that the book benefits all by proving that Jesus existed and is not the “conflation of pagan god-man and death/Resurrection myths with first-century Jewish messiah traditions” that some “experts” are claiming him to be.⁶⁵ The authors agree that their book will not only benefit all, but that it will be a boon to Christians to prove that the object of our faith is not a mere fantasy, since “people who believe in a physical Resurrection would not be affected by the discovery of a Jesus bone box,”⁶⁶ and it would actually benefit non-Christians as well, since “Jews and Christians can rediscover the historical Jesus, each from their own perspective.”⁶⁷

Their case is built primarily on the fact that the names “Joseph” “Jesus, Son of Joseph,” two forms of “Mary,” “Matthew” were all located together in the same tomb, each on a bone box, called an ossuary, which is a kind of stone coffin. In the first century the rich would allow the body of their deceased to decompose for a year, and then place it in such a bone box for permanent burial.⁶⁸

65 James Cameron, “Foreword,” in Simcha Jacobovici and Charles Pellegrino, *The Jesus Family Tomb: The Discovery, the Investigation, and the Evidence That Could Change History* (New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco, 2007), vii.

66 Ibid., 70. How does that work exactly? “Even a physical Resurrection doesn’t depend on the fact that the first tomb was empty. It depends on Jesus’ appearances among the disciples. A Christian believer can believe that Jesus was removed from the first tomb, traditionally identified with the tomb under the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, and laid in a second tomb. With respect to his Ascension to heaven, the New Testament also does not tell us that its chroniclers believed that Jesus, when he ascended, needed to take his entire body with him. So if you believe in a physical Ascension, the ossuary is a problem. But if you believe in a spiritual one, it becomes an object of veneration” (71). As they envision it, “Jesus appears before the apostles as a sort of holy ghost,” this solution somehow suggesting to them that believing in a “physical Resurrection” is compatible with their theories, though believing in a “physical Ascension” is not. The irenic sentiment is there, even if the logic is missing a few bones. I will revisit and amplify this analysis later in the text of the present article.

67 Ibid., 138.

68 Those who would like to read an exhaustive study of ossuaries and their context (including many helpful photographs) should consult University of Haifa Prof. Rachel Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs, Practices and Rites in the Second Temple Period* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2005). In her six references to the East Talpiyot tomb, the only aspects she includes as worthy of note are the fact that these are “dug out” or “shaft” (4) tombs, “covered with stone slabs” (73), with “one tomb oriented east-west” (22), in which the body of a male was discovered (4), while “inscriptions on two ossuaries (Nos. 2 and 4) record a father and son” (299), with an “inscription apparently” giving “the artist’s name and the price tag possibly for the ossuary decoration” (360) and the discovery of a bronze “spatula” or “kohl stick” “probably used to prepare cosmetics as well as to apply them,” which was “elaborately decorated with incised rings and bands” (395-96) (suggesting to me that the women in this “Jesus Family” may have been fairly well off to have possessed such finery).

The question we should all ask is obvious: If the tomb was discovered over thirty years ago, why have most of us not heard of it before this book and documentary were recently released?

The answer is because this cluster of names did not impress the Israeli archeologists who discovered it. Why was that? The reason is because the name “Jesus” was very common in Israel, it is simply the English translation of the Greek version of the Hebrew name “Joshua,” the great military hero of the conquest of Canaan. How common was it? The authors themselves, who as I noted are trying to be honest, estimate that, during the entire use of bone boxes in the first century, 80,000 men lived in Jerusalem. They calculate, “Out of these, 7,200 would have been called Jesus and 11,200 would have been called Joseph. Mutiplying the percentages against each other (.09 x .14 x 80,000), we get 1,008 men who would have been called Jesus, son of Joseph during the century of ossuary use. In other words, approximately one in 79 males was called Jesus, son of Joseph.”⁶⁹ Actually, this is a lowest-end estimate. Henri Daniel-Rops in his book, *Daily Life in the Time of Jesus*, estimates a possible maximum of 150,000 residents of Jerusalem in Jesus’ time, meaning about 75,000 males were alive with him. Over a century of ossuary use, the figure, of course, would be far higher.⁷⁰

As for the other names discovered in the tomb, “Joseph,” which celebrates the son of Jacob who became a ruler of Egypt, is even more plentiful. And Mary was the most common Jewish woman’s name in that day, held by approximately 25% of the women in Israel. A low end of 12,500, but a possible 15,000-19,000, or even 20,000 women simultaneously were called Mary in Jerusalem alone during Jesus’ time.

Let me illustrate what I mean. My name is William. I reside in a little town of 8,315 people. Although I do not know how many Williams have cell phones or unlisted phones, are children with no phones, have William as a middle name, or how many of the simple “W” listings are Williams, still, by scanning my local telephone book, at a quick count, for “William” as a first name, I counted 104 listed. If I include only the residential section of my town, there are approximately 104 Williams per 4,060 listings, or 1 in 40, about 200 Williams per 8,000 people. If we all die here and are buried in our local cemetery, one could expect at least 200 graves of men named William listed in our telephone book and living here today (and to that number one might still choose to add additional cell phone holders, and, in the case of small children, no current phone holding Williams). And that is on an estimate of roughly 8,000. Imagine if my town had 25,000, 75,000, 150,000 people! How many of us would eventually crowd into the local cemeteries? Enough to encourage the local head-stone shops to acquire a “William” stamp...

Further, right now there are four William Spencers listed in the larger telephone book as alive and living in my immediate area. Beside myself, there are two William Spencers living in a bordering town, while another W. Spencer lives in still another town covered by our telephone book. A William Spencer is even a student at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary’s Hamilton campus, where I have a mailbox. We are forever getting each other’s mail. We both order medicine and I have received his in my seminary mail box numerous times. He is not listed in the telephone book because he has a cell phone. How many William Spencers have cell phones, or are minors, as I noted, I simply cannot tell.

69 Jacobovici and Pellegino, *The Jesus Family Tomb*, 75. A colleague of theirs, James Tabor, in his “The Jesus Dynasty Blog” (March 24, 2007: 1-4), comes up with an even more breath-taking set of calculations, estimating even lower population figures for Jerusalem between 25,000-75,000, with which, if one figures in a “modest pre-70 CE family burial cave” and a “tighter time span” than three generations, and the ossuary of James, the brother of Jesus as both authentic and from this tomb, one “would be left with only one person named Jesus” as the probable tomb occupant, according to Gary R. Habermas, who cites these calculations and analyzes their problems in his brief but fair book, *The Secret of the Talpiot Tomb: Unraveling the Mystery of The Jesus Family Tomb* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2007), 18.

70 Henri Daniel-Rops, *Daily Life in the Time of Jesus* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant, 1962), 87-88. Daniel-Rops bases his estimate on Josephus’ *Contra Apionem*, which cites the Greek geographer Hecataeus of Abdera’s report there were 120,000 inhabitants in Alexander’s time and reckoning his final figure on his understanding that “Jerusalem continually expanded during the Hellenistic and then the Roman periods” (87).

When I was a youth, growing up in North Plainfield, New Jersey, another young William Spencer, living in Plainfield, the town next door, sat on a bunch of fish hooks and had to go to the same hospital where I was born to have them removed. That incident made the local papers (news apparently being scarce that day). Immediately, everyone I knew asked me if I had trouble sitting down. A few years later some girl called me up and asked, “Is this the Bill Spencer who drives the red Mustang?” “No,” I said, “This is the Bill Spencer who drives the green Valiant.”

Until very recently, over the last several years, I have been double checked at the airport, apparently because of the misdoings of another William Spencer. I had begun to notice that I was being singled out and my baggage searched with depressing regularity, and then one officer, while regarding me, observed to his colleague, “Look at him. He can’t be the same one.” After that, I began to get pre-emptive, handing in my passport and requesting, “Please look at my birth date – I’m not the William Spencer causing all the trouble.” In fact, the main reason I decided to publish under my full name is that when I began to write I discovered there was already a Bill Spencer who had published a book in Canada against rock music and another who wrote an article in a periodical to which I was subscribing telling how in his frustration at not being published he began drinking and beat up his wife. I wanted very much not to be confused with either of those two gentlemen. Later, I learned of the more applaudable work of the William Spencer who writes nautical books. Suffice it to say, back here in the safety of my own home, I muse: Just think if there were, at the lower end count, some 7,200 of us, as they speculate there were Jesuses! I would be the subject of endless misidentifications.

The British Scholar David Instone-Brewer in an on-line “Visual Sermon,” “Jesus’ Tomb is not lost, just empty,” reminds us that the Romans captured 97,000 people after the siege and the fall of Jerusalem in C.E. 70, according to Josephus in his book *The Wars of the Jews* (6.420). This does not include all those who died in the siege and in the city’s fall, so the population was considerably larger than the low-end count. But Prof. Instone-Brewer also reminds us that “the number of people buried at Jerusalem was higher than you might expect - because the faithful came to the holy city of Jerusalem to retire or to die – so the number of people who died in the time of Jesus was tens of thousands.”⁷¹

He estimates 1 out of 10 were called Joseph, 1 out of 4 called Mary, so “the chance of a Mary marrying a Joseph is $1/10 \times 1/4$ - i.e. 1/40th – every 40 pairs of tombs you come across will be a Mary and Joseph.” In a tomb with 10 ossuaries like this one, “one of them was almost certain to be Mary” with “a one in ten chance it would have both a Mary and Joseph.” Further, he speculates “about 1/25 of all males were called Jesus – so in a room of 100 people, four of them would be called Jesus.” And he reminds us, “Pilate judged and sentenced two people called Jesus on the same day – Jesus of Nazareth, and Jesus bar Abbas (Mt. 27.17).” Therefore, he concludes: “So there are one or two thousand tombs with ten ossuaries buried somewhere – so keep digging and we should find another 200 tombs containing Jesus’ family.”⁷²

And, it is true, different estimates of how many bone boxes containing the name “Jesus” range from Charles Pellegrino’s conservative “among the 233 inscribed ossuaries cataloged by the IAA, the name...Jesus appeared 9 percent” (approximately 22 boxes)⁷³ to Dillon Burroughs’ claim that the Israeli archaeologist Amos Kloner, who worked on the Talpiot (Jesus Family) tomb, “says there are more than 900 buried tombs just like the ‘Jesus’ tomb within a two-mile radius of Talpiot. Of them, 71 bear the name Jesus and two use Jesus, son of Joseph. The tomb in Talpiot is one of them.”⁷⁴ University of Haifa Professor Rachel Hachlili confirms Yehosu’a (Jesus) is one of “the most

71 David Instone-Brewer, http://www.cc-art.com/visualSermons/JesusTomb/_SERMON.HTM, accessed 10/31/08, 3.

72 Ibid., 2-3.

73 Jacobovici and Pellegrino, *The Jesus Family Tomb*, 75. Gary Habermas cites Richard Bauckham agreeing “the name Jesus is found on 22 ossuaries” (*The Secret of the Talpiot Tomb*, 26).

74 Dillon Burroughs, *The Jesus Family Tomb Controversy: How the Evidence Falls Short* (Ann Arbor, MI: Nimble,

common Jewish names in the onomasticon [list or collection of proper names] of the late Second Temple period,”⁷⁵ including “the names on funerary inscription (mainly on ossuaries).” She also notes “Yehosu’a” is one of “the most common names among high priests,” appearing among the most frequent (“three times”).⁷⁶ The inscription found in the Talpiot tomb in 1980 was, of course, nearly illegible, prompting Gary Habermas to ask, “Can we even be sure of the name ‘Jesus’ on the Talpiot ossuary? In the first place, it’s not even clear that the name on the ossuary is ‘Jesus.’...it may not be ‘Jesus’ at all,” and he cites archaeologist Stephen Pfann, who told the Associated Press on February 26, 2007, “It’s more likely the name ‘Hanun.’”⁷⁷ Prof. Habermas reproduces a facsimile of the inscription in his book, so readers can decide for themselves what is this “initial name on the right,” which he observes is “like a child’s scrawl with a crayon on the wall.”⁷⁸

Of course, the 1980 Talpiot tomb ossuary was not the first bone box unearthed with the name Jesus, son of Joseph. In 1926, an earlier one was uncovered with the inscriptions “Yeshu” (between two rosettes), “Yeshu’a, son of Yehoseph, or Jesus, son of Joseph.” Craig Evans notes, “Although no serious scholar has suggested that this ossuary at one time contained the remains of Jesus of Nazareth...it provides first-century attestation of the shortened form Yeshu.”⁷⁹ In Greek, of course, the name is rendered *Iēsous*, as we see in the New Testament. Prof. Evans adds, “And of course, this ossuary attests the affiliation ‘Jesus, son of Joseph.’”⁸⁰ Needless to say, many more such ossuaries would be unearthed if all the Jesuses buried were rich enough to have had coffins, which few Jews of any name were. Since only about ten percent of the Jewish population - the very rich - could afford ossuaries and Jesus was, after all, in the world’s eyes only an executed carpenter from a poor family, such opulence was not assured. Joseph of Arimathea was certainly rich enough to have afforded him one, if Jesus’ body had stayed around long enough to have needed an ossuary. But, it is not certain, had his body decayed, that, when the proper time for reburial arrived, those family members who removed the bones so Joseph could put his tomb to its originally intended use would have had the wherewithal to afford one. And, it is also not assured that Joseph would have extended his initial courtesy to a second act providing yet one more kindness.

Later on, perhaps, when Jesus’ brother James was universally regarded with great esteem, he may have been given one, if the recent appearance of a bone box with the disputed inscription, “James, the brother of Jesus,” is indeed authentic, but that Jesus would have automatically received one if his body had stayed around to be reburied this soon after such a disgraceful ending I find very doubtful.

Further, René A. López, pastor of Iglesia Biblica Nuestra Fe, in Dallas, Texas, who is doing his Ph.D. studies on this so-called “Jesus family tomb,” in a recent scholarly paper, which he published in the journal *Bibliotheca Sacra* (165 [October-December 2008]) and presented in November 2008 at the Evangelical Theological Society annual meeting, points out that there is no compelling reason to suppose the Mary whose bone box was found in the tomb was the wife of Joseph. Perhaps, he argues, she was the wife of Matthew or Jose. Maybe she was their sister. Maybe she was the wife of this Jesus. Maybe she was his sister. Maybe she was an honored servant. Maybe she was his or

2007), 2. This book is a little more do-it-yourself (with two copy-editing errors on page 1 [leaving out an “of” in paragraph one and omitting Jacobovici’s last name]), but the author writes with zeal and has a publishing track record. Another popular book with an international flavor is Philippine author and speaker Don Sausa’s *The Jesus Tomb: Is It Fact or Fiction? Scholars Chime in* (Fort Myers: Fla: Vision, 2007), which addresses the scientific aspects of JFT’s claims and draws from a number of interviews, articles, and other less accessible documents.

75 Hachlili, “Hebrew Names, Personal Names, Family Names and Nicknames of Jews in the Second Temple Period,” in *Families and Family Relations: As Represented in Early Judaism and Early Christianity: Texts and Fictions*, eds. Jan Willem Van Henten and Athalya Brenner (Leiden, Netherlands: Deo, 2000), 84-85.

76 Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs, Practices and Rites in the Second Temple Period*, 196.

77 Habermas, *The Secret of the Talpiot Tomb*, 26-27.

78 Ibid.

79 Craig Evans, *Jesus and the Ossuaries* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2003), 94.

80 Ibid.

Matthew's daughter.⁸¹ As we will see in a moment, he makes a similar argument against concluding Mariamne was necessarily the wife of Jesus.

In fact, it strikes me that the amount of effort invested in testing the DNA of the Mariamne residue to see if she were related to Jesus or not – and finding she was not – was not as important as testing residue from the Maria box to see if this second Mary was the mother of the interred Jesus. That would have been another name coincidence to strengthen their circumstantial case, but, unless one of you graciously reading the present article saw such a testing mentioned or a reason such testing did not happen, to my eye the scholarship passes in silence over this second Mary. Since neither Judah, son of Jesus, nor James, son of Joseph, had any DNA left to test, the whole DNA search adds up basically to nothing. And, as for testing the ossuaries' patina, without testing all the tombs nearby, it is simply irrelevant. Similar soil conditions can exist all over the area. As with the fact that Mariamne and Jesus were not related, the negative match does not prove they were necessarily married any more than a similar patina proves the disputed "James, the son of Joseph" bone box comes from the same tomb. And, even if we grant it did, it would not mean any Joseph could not have fathered a Jesus, Jose, Jacob (James), and Matthew (of whom the Bible records are silent) and still not be related to Jesus Christ.

By a similar reasoning, Pastor López observes:

DNA tests were made on biological matter from the ossuaries of Jesus and Mariame (or Mariamne). The results showed there was no match. The *JFT* advocates on that basis claimed that these individuals must have been married, since nonrelatives would not reside in a family tomb. Is this the whole story?

Unfortunately other options needed to be explored. First, without conducting tests on other ossuaries one should not reach this conclusion. For example Mariame could have been married to Jose or Matthew. She could have been this Jesus' paternal half-sister, aunt, cousin, sister-in-law, or mother-in-law, since the testing involved maternal, also known as mitochondrial, DNA. *Mariame* could have been an adopted daughter or even an exceptional servant who was loved like a daughter, and so buried in the family tomb.

Second, since many people were buried in this tomb, this strongly hinders the testing of DNA evidence.

Third, as Witherington notes, having no DNA control sample from Jesus' family to compare with the Talpiot DNA samples makes it impossible to know which Jesus this DNA belongs to. That Jesus and Mariame are not related means nothing, since one can never compare the Talpiot DNA with Jesus of Nazareth DNA.⁸²

Further, with all the emphasis the book puts on the "x" being a cross and other such data to suggest this is a Christian tomb, it seems to me that believers would not have identified Jesus Christ as the "son of Joseph." They would have inscribed on his ossuary, "The Son of God." The gospel records are very clear about this – every one of the four gospels makes this point. Matthew 1:16 identifies Joseph only as "the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born" and not as in the rest of Matthew's genealogical passage "the father of." Mark 6:3 tells us Jesus' opponents label him "the son of Mary" and associate him with his siblings, but not as "the son of Joseph." Even if Joseph were dead, a son would still carry his designation as son of his father, but everyone, friend and foe, knew Jesus was not Joseph's son. Luke 3:23 notes Jesus "was the son (as was thought) of Joseph son of Heli," before returning to its normal identifying tag for the rest of its genealogy: "son of."

81 René A. López, "The Jesus Family Tomb Exposed: Does *The Jesus Family Tomb* Disprove His Physical Resurrection?," a paper delivered at the Evangelical Theological Society 60th Meeting, November 19, 2008, Providence, Rhode Island.

82 René A. López, "Does *The Jesus Family Tomb* Disprove His Physical Resurrection?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 165 (Oct-Dec 2008), 436-37.

And, finally, John 8:19 records the Pharisees sneering challenge: “Where is your father?” pointing out they are children of Abraham (v. 39) and “not illegitimate children”(v. 41), provoking Jesus to inform them “the devil” is their true father (v.44) and that he himself comes from God (v. 42). I believe this to be a key point: Christians would not call Jesus “the son of Joseph.” The authors of *JFT*, apparently realizing this problem, attempt to make the Ebionites, “who believed that Jesus was Messiah while rejecting any idea of his divinity,” the ones to rebury the body of Jesus (and his family?), as opposed to the “Nazarenes ...who accepted the tenets of the evolving Christian faith, including the virgin birth and the Holy Trinity.”⁸³ Thus, we see theory forces their speculation to become more and more fanciful and illogical. That a band of marauding Judaizing conspirators stole the body out from under the guards’ noses and eluded Jesus’ own disciples is, frankly, a wild and absurd speculation that suggests no logical explanation of why anyone or any group would do such a thing. What would they gain? In the case of the Ebionites, who did not even accept the divinity of Christ, so would hardly fake a resurrection, the suggestion is nonsensical.

Further, in his book, *The Jesus Family Tomb Examined: Did Jesus Rise Physically?* Pastor López comments on the claim that the mark on the Jesus box is a cross.⁸⁴ The authors to their credit do admit that the original archaeologists who excavated the tomb, like Amos Kloner, do dismiss the “X” with such observations as, “that X is a mason’s mark, not a cross.”⁸⁵ The authors of *JFT* then spend considerable time trying to prove that it is indeed a cross. But López points out a piece of datum they do not mention in drawing their conclusions, when he notes:

The *JFT* and *LTJ* [*“The Lost Tomb of Jesus”* film] advocates, along with others, have made the mistake of incorrectly understanding the X mark on ossuaries as a Christian symbol of the cross...However, this is nothing more than a mason’s mark to align the front part of [the] lid with that of the ossuary that appears on hundreds of first-century bone boxes. Rahmani’s catalogue [the authoritative catalogue of ossuary boxes, compiled by L.Y. Rahmani] contains about “40%” of “decorated and plain ossuaries” that “bear marks” of crosses, zigzags, and other markings. [Rahmani] says, “The location of paired marks indicates that *their only function* was to ensure the positioning of the lid for the closest possible fit on the chest.”⁸⁶

If such marks were actually crosses, by the same reasoning the *JFT* authors apply to the mark on the Jesus box, one might have to conclude that every rich Jew buried in Jesus’ time with an X was a Christian, which, of course, is absurd.

Further, rather than the daughter proffered by *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* and *The Da Vinci Code*, whom Mary supposedly took to France after Jesus was crucified, this actual Jesus has a son named Judah buried next to him.

In fact, the only designations of parentage or relationship found in the tomb were the rough inscriptions, “Jesus the son of Joseph” and “Judah the son of Jesus.” The other bone boxes do not say, “Mary the mother of Jesus” or “Mariamne the wife of Jesus.” And the so-called missing box is missing basically because it was blank and blanks are routinely discarded and sold cheaply as old but valueless artifacts.

The fact is, absolutely nowhere in any ancient literature is the one and only Jesus Christ ever reported to have had a son, or even a wife. So how could the ossuary, laying beside a son’s, possibly be his? Had Jesus Christ had a child, the disciples would have told us. They identified his mother, father, brothers, close friends, even his supporters on the Sanhedrin! Why keep his child

83 Jacobovici and Pellegrino, *The Jesus Family Tomb*, 34.

84 René A. López, *The Jesus Family Tomb Examined: Did Jesus Rise Physically?* (Springfield, MO: 21st Century Press, 2008), 140-42.

85 Jacobovici and Pellegrino, *The Jesus Family Tomb*, 18.

86 López, *The Jesus Family Tomb Examined*, 140.

secret? Decades later Julius Africanus reports information he gathered from one of Jesus' brother's descendents explaining the two genealogies in Matthew's and Luke's gospels (see Eusebius, *History of the Church*, 1.7), but these relatives do not add to their explanation by revealing that Jesus' own bloodline went on. If Christ had had a child who died in infancy, the gospels would have mentioned that fact, since they tell many other less significant details about Jesus' life.

In the light of such a glaring omission, the JFT authors posit that, perhaps, we find no evidence because Jesus' son was never mentioned. Why not? Because his life must have been in danger, since, as they put it, if the Romans "killed the Messiah – the King of Israel – then the wife and child of the Messiah were also in jeopardy."⁸⁷

But, again, they ignore the fact that Pilate expressly does not want to harm Jesus, but declares "*I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death*" (Luke 23:22). In fact, Pilate washes his hands of guilt publically (Matt. 27:24), since he was "wanting to release Jesus" (Luke 23:20). Why, then, if he tried to exonerate himself from Jesus' death, would he be a threat to Jesus' son?

Further, neither Pilate nor the temple authorities make any attempt to hunt down and arrest the disciples, several of whom stood by the cross, including John and Jesus' mother. And Pilate even graciously gives Jesus' body to Joseph of Arimathea, who buries it and suffers no reported harassment.

We need to put this in perspective. People were being crucified all the time. But neither Pilate nor anyone else crucified any of Jesus' brothers or his parents at the time of Jesus' execution. From Pilate's point of view, this was simply a case of one-off Roman justice to rid the area of a trouble maker and calm down the natives. Jesus' child, had he had one, would have been in no danger.

Further, to make their case, the authors have to ignore the New Testament reports completely and speculate the disciples did indeed steal the body of Jesus.⁸⁸ For what purpose they do not say.

Then, falling into a similar trap as the authors of *The Passover Plot*, *Holy Blood*, *Holy Grail*, and *The Da Vinci Code*, they have to turn to late heretical books, written centuries after the New Testament, for their proofs. As the fruit of this quest, they happen on a spurious book calling itself *The Acts of Philip*, written some 250-350 years after these events and purporting to be by Jesus' disciple of that name. Their main interest in it is that Mary Magdalene is called "Mariamne,"⁸⁹ a name from the Talpiot tomb, but along with that datum they acquire some unwanted baggage. In that so-called "Acts," Philip is identified as the brother of Mary Magdalene, but John 1:44 tells us Philip is from Bethsaida, not from Magdala. I suppose one could argue that at 300+ years old at the time of authorship, Philip would have no doubt been suffering from a certain amount of memory loss and be sketchy on some of his details, but a more logical response suggests itself.

Further, López raises another interesting point about this name "Mariamne." Rather than the name for Mary Magdalene that the JFT authors claim the Harvard Scholar François Bovon pointed out to them,⁹⁰ and to which their translation tags the word "mara" on the end to signify "Lord" or "Master," following the *Acts of Philip's* contention that Mary Magdalene was the Apostle to the Apostles and, perhaps, the honored wife of Jesus,⁹¹ Professor Bovon emailed López that he, in fact, agreed with L.Y. Rahmani that the "Mariamne Mara" inscription could be read, "Maria who is

⁸⁷ Jacobovici and Pellegrino, *The Jesus Family Tomb*, 106.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 2.

⁸⁹ Rachel Hachlili points out that "Mariame...in several variations" is among "the most common female names in the Second Temple period," in fact, along with Mariah, Shalom/Salome, and Shelamziyon "about 50% of the entire female population bore these names" (*Jewish Funerary Customs, Practices and Rites in the Second Temple Period*, 198).

⁹⁰ Jacobovici and Pellegrino, *The Family Tomb of Jesus*, 100.

⁹¹ Ibid., 19, 76.

also known as Martha,” or, as he put it in the email, “Mariam *could also be known as* Martha.” He also stated that “I do not believe that one should read that she was a mar,” meaning he rejects the rendering of “master” or “Lord.” In fact, he wrote, “I would add that another solution would be Mariamne and Martha (two names of the two different persons),” meaning that two women were buried in the bone box: a Mariam and a Martha.⁹²

While we are surveying such speculation, it might be interesting to point out that, since Mormon president Orson Hyde, when preaching on Isaiah 53:10, “He shall see his offspring,” contended that the marriage at Cana was Jesus’, and one of Brigham Young’s wives explained in 1876 that, according to Young, Jesus actually had a harem comprised of Mary and Martha of Bethany, as well as Mary Magdalene,⁹³ a whole new riot of speculation may break out that the ossuaries belong to our Lord Jesus and his wives, Mary of Bethany, buried along with her sister, Martha, Mary Magdalene, and Jesus’ son, Judah. Now we would suddenly have three wives of Jesus crowding into the tomb with one child between them, though none of them are identified as such in the gospel records.

Of course, all of this conjecture flies in the face of Jesus’ own insistence on monogamy in Mark 10:5-9, which just shows us how absurd speculating along such a line of inquiry can become when one seizes on something as ephemeral as common names and spins a theory out of them, driven by an idea (in this case, that Jesus is buried somewhere) that one thrusts onto the facts and then inflicts on a biblically illiterate public with a lot more credulity than it has Sunday School Bible knowledge. I suppose this might appear in a small way to be better than the plight of *The Da Vinci Code* and *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, in which all the authors were taken in by fraud and extended that hoax onto the buyers. But the end result seems to me to be about the same: the safety belt of the eyewitness records is slackened and truth hits the windshield of error when plowed into by the 18 wheeler of lane-changing theory, driven under the reckless influence of sheer speculation.

In essence, *The Jesus Family Tomb* is an adventure saga put together with an almost breathless intensity and energy over a two year period. Being deductive, rather than inductive, seeking to prove a theory rather than simply assess the facts, it becomes the victim, not of hoax, as the previous two books, but of post-modern higher critical scholarship and all its speculative play with the so-called “other gospels,” late and Gnostic as they are, settling for proof of the dry ice and strobe light variety, again while disagreeing with the actual records of the events drawn up by eyewitnesses – the canonical gospels.⁹⁴ Therefore, this book ends hunting wildly for any data to support its theory, leaving it opposed to the studied findings of the original archaeologists whose daily task is to unearth and assess such data. In short, it amounts to the stumbling and hasty conclusions of well meaning people who simply do not know what they are doing.

Consequently, they also stumble onto another heretical book, the Gnostic *Gospel of Thomas*,⁹⁵ and decide the Apostle Thomas must have been the Judah whom they posit was that son of Jesus,

92 René A. López, *The Jesus Family Tomb Examined*, 72-73.

93 William Phipps, *Was Jesus Married?* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1970), 12, 9-10, 70.

94 While it may have been in vogue in the 1800s and early 1900s to view the gospels as late date products by those who lived long after the time of Jesus and could never possibly have known him, that theory has been rendered obsolete by subsequent manuscript discoveries, such as the fragments of Matthew known as p4, p64, p67, which Carsten Peter Thiede in his article “Papyrus Magdalen Greek 17 (Gregory-Aland p64): A Reappraisal,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 46.1 (1995), 38, dates about C.E. 100 (though it may be earlier), and p52, which is a fragment of John 18 that may date as early as the lifetime of John, John having died during the reign of Trajan (C.E. 98-117, according to the testimony of Irenaeus, cited in Eusebius, *History of the Church*, 3.23). About p52, the distinguished textual critic Bruce Metzger observed, “Had this little fragment been known during the middle of the past century, that school of New Testament criticism which was inspired by the brilliant Tübingen professor Ferdinand Christian Baur could not have argued that the fourth Gospel was not composed until about the year 160” (in Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 4th ed. [New York, NY: Oxford, 2005]), 56.

95 Jacobovici and Pellegrino, *The Jesus Family Tomb*, 96.

being a child of about “ten or thirteen years [old] on the day of Crucifixion.”⁹⁶ What they do not seem to realize is that, by both its later Gnostic theology and its lack of evidence of an earlier existence, the *Gospel of Thomas* was written no earlier than the opening years of the 100s, though it claims Thomas, Jesus’ disciple, is its author: “These are the secret sayings which the living Jesus spoke and which Didymos Judas Thomas wrote down.”⁹⁷

If the practice of using ossuaries, terminated at the fall of Jerusalem in C.E. 70, and if Thomas were indeed Jesus’ son, and a youth when he died and was buried beside his parents in a smaller bone box which indicates a youth is buried there,⁹⁸ how could he have written a book in the early 100s,⁹⁹ when he would have had to have been, by the book’s date’s reckoning, at least in his 80s, while at the same time having been buried in an ossuary at least 30 years previously (and still a youth, as the small coffin would indicate and the *JFT* authors contend, more likely 50+ years earlier)? He would have either been in the grave in the stone coffin or not. He could not have been both in and out, sealed in a bone box while writing a book of bad theology at the same time many decades later.

The authors also make the elementary error of confusing the genealogies in Luke as being of Joseph and Mary, when the descendents of Jesus’ brother clearly told Julius Africanus that they are both the genealogies of Joseph, one by natural descent and the other, after Leverite marriage, by law.¹⁰⁰

In short, investigative journalism, which begins with a theory and seeks deductively to prove that theory, is not necessarily scholarship, which starts with the data and seeks inductively to interpret that data. Instead, investigative journalism looks for what is “newsworthy,” that is: what will make a good story; support that story; catch people’s attention and compel them to want to pay for the story, read it, tell their friends to read it, write a letter to the editor about it, watch a film on it, maybe win a Pulitzer Prize for it, and hopefully do the public a worthwhile service by producing it.

So, the approach begins deductively from a hunch, not necessarily inductively from carefully amassed and compelling facts. In this case, it begins with a cluster of names in a general time period. This, then, produces a theory for which they search for supporting proof. If, as in this case, no corroborating proof surfaces, they keep searching 250-350 years after the event until, in this case, they find a Gnostic document that gives them something they can present as proof.

Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the authors of *JFT* present their data, not in scholarly fashion, but as a kind of adventure story (one author even confides, “I now felt like I was part of a James Bond thriller”¹⁰¹) with an accompanying film trimmed with all the Hollywood bells and whistles of mood music, ominous tones, provocative close-ups, talking heads, sound bites, in living color.

The authors, to their credit, try not to alienate Christians, by claiming such a discovery, if it were truly Jesus’ remains, would not affect belief in the resurrection, since they contend Jesus’ resurrection was with a spiritual body and, therefore, they conclude, it does not matter whether his bones were left behind or not.¹⁰² They phrase this sentiment rather strangely, however: “People who believe in a physical Resurrection would not be affected by the discovery of a Jesus bone box.”

96 Ibid., 106.

97 See “The Gospel of Thomas,” in Bart D. Ehrman, ed. and trans., *The New Testament and Other Early Christian Writings: A Reader*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 117.

98 Ibid., 62. They suggest “Judah, son of Jesus” and “Thomas were indeed one and the same person” on pages 107-08.

99 Ibid., 109.

100 See Eusebius, *History of the Church*, 1.7. I discuss Jesus’ relatives’ explanation to Julius Africanus for the reason there are two differing genealogies of Jesus recorded in Matthew and Luke in “A Personal Reflection on the Undisputed Extant Works of Africanus” in *Africanus Journal*, vol. 1., no. 1 (April 2009): 20-23.

101 Jacobovici and Pellegrino, *The Jesus Family Tomb*, 48.

102 Ibid., 70.

Do they really mean “people who believe in a spiritual resurrection,” as, for example, the Jehovah’s Witnesses or those in Christian Science, for whom the material is illusory anyway? For orthodox Christians who believe in “a physical Resurrection,” yes, it would affect us profoundly. If Jesus’ bones are in the grave, then he could not have had a physical resurrection. As orthodox Christians, we believe in the resurrection of the body, not in disembodied souls that flit about in the ether. So, for Christians, “resurrection” means, as Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 15, that the “physical body” that is “sown” and the “spiritual body” that is resurrected are connected, as a seed disappears into a new plant (vv. 42-44). If Jesus’ body is still in the grave, then he has not been raised and we are to be pitied for our foolishness (vv. 16-19), but, as Paul assures us, he was raised – the old body has transformed into the new one. So, I, for one, appreciate the authors’ kindness in attempting to set Christian hearts at rest, but I believe their words of assurance might rather warm the hearts of Jehovah’s Witnesses and those who share their views.

Further, I observe that what these authors are contending not only disagrees with the New Testament documents, which are so much older than the newer, spurious “gospels” upon which the *JFT* authors rely, but also with the actual archaeologists in charge of the dig, one of whom told a 1996 BBC film crew who had learned of the same tomb that connecting it up with Jesus Christ is “preposterous,”¹⁰³ a position he still continued to maintain in 2005, assuring the authors, “There’s no story here.”¹⁰⁴ The assistant who mapped the tomb and is now himself a respected archaeologist still says, “I would need something a bit more convincing than just these common names.”¹⁰⁵

Did Jesus’ Disciples Steal His Body?

The real reports about the accusation that the disciples stole the body reveal just the opposite than what the authors contend, and I quote one report:

After the priests had assembled with the elders, they devised a plan to give a large sum of money to the soldiers, telling them, “You must say, ‘His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ If this comes to the governor’s ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story is still told among the Jews to this day” (Matt 28:12-15).

And it obviously continues to be told today as well.

Of course, serious problems exist with the priests and elders’ story. For example, if the disciples had stolen the body, why did they not tell their own women? They let them show up and run the risk of having to deal with the guards without letting them know what was happening? That is not very likely.

And, why would Paul not, when he was still known as Saul and persecuting the church, have uncovered this conspiracy? He was torturing and imprisoning believers to uncover the truth. Could he not have beaten knowledge of such a hoax out of some weakening conspirator? Would he not have been able to catch someone in a lie? Would he have been taken in completely by the ruse? None of this is likely. With his brilliance and zeal, he would have been the one most likely to unearth whatever was the truth. Further, since Paul was dedicated to stamping the faith out, why would he completely change his own attitude if he had not indeed encountered the risen Christ? And, if his conversion account was falsely reported, would he not have corrected it and kept on persecuting? If he was knocked off his horse or mule, say, by a stroke, would he not have eventually learned from a slip of the tongue by insiders that it was all a hoax? When he was finally admitted into the inner circle, would they not have confided in him, informed him of the hoax, explained its purpose (whatever that could have been)? And would he not have stopped short of being stoned,

103 Ibid., 23-24

104 Ibid., 20.

105 Ibid., 19.

whipped, executed for a faith he had once opposed? No answer but his utter conviction that Christ was risen indeed makes any logical sense of his change of heart.

On the disciples' side is reported only doubt and consternation regarding the suddenly empty tomb. They are in hiding. They are all devastated, dispirited, depressed – by their own accounts. They would hardly risk tangling with armed guards set about the tomb. The revisionist claim that this shattered band raided the tomb, braved armed guards, and carried off a corpse which had already been buried by two of their own group – and a corpse that was about to decompose – without a shred of historical evidence or a shred of logical meaning for such an action – is utterly absurd.

Far more believable is their own historical account that they disbelieve the women's report, and they then run to the tomb, baffled by what is transpiring. And, after they witness the risen Christ themselves, not one of the disciples or any other of those eyewitnesses mentioned, even under martyrdom, ever admitted on record that his or her testimony was not true. Not a single one. If anyone of them had confessed that what they claimed they had seen was in truth a false report and part of a conspiracy, that denial would have been flung at Christians by every hostile historian from their times until today. But none of them ever did. The disciples simply did not have the body. You see, they did not expect a resurrection; they did not engineer a resurrection, and they did not believe it when it was reported to them – that is, until each of them received undeniable proof by having the evidence walk right up to them and show them his wounds.

In fact, the idea of a resurrection after death was not that prevalent even in the ancient world. Many Greek philosophers certainly did not believe in it. When Paul tried to share it with the gathering on Mars Hill, some began laughing in derision and mocking him (Acts 17:32). Even in Israel, the Sadducees, who controlled the temple, did not believe they or anyone else would be resurrected. While the Pharisees did believe, in the Sadducees' view, the soul dies with the body.¹⁰⁶

As far as the case of Jesus is concerned, one fact is certain, neither the Sadducees nor the Pharisees had the body. The priests or the faithful Jewish laity would merely have had to produce it to stamp out Christianity – but they could not produce it.

As we saw, several authors posit some third unknown party slipped in and spirited it away, but no one has satisfactorily identified who would do that and to what end. Nobody breaks into the tomb of a dead carpenter who was executed by the Romans, risking the possibility of bodily harm from the professional security guards posted to prohibit just such an infringement, while successfully eluding all the principal players friend and foe involved in this policing action, without a purpose that is subsequently revealed. But, nothing was ever revealed about the whereabouts of the corpse – nothing, that is, except the proliferation of reports that it had reanimated. So, one conclusion is manifestly clear: Neither supporter nor opponent had Jesus' body. It had apparently disappeared of its own accord. And, when it immediately reappears, all manner of people report it is resuscitated, walking, talking, eating, teaching, showing its wounds.

Now, let us direct our attention to yet another significant point: nowhere is the empty tomb defended. Paul does not even mention it in his discussions. Why not? Because, nobody had to prove that. Everybody knew the tomb was empty. It was not an absence that impressed them so much as a Presence: the overwhelming weight of their eyewitness experience that Jesus did appear.

Thus, it is interesting to note that what the Scriptures offer is the kind of proof with which we settle questions in court: documents and witnesses. What other proof could there be?

Given all this data, no wonder archaeologists from 1980 to today remain unconvinced the Talpiot tomb is Jesus Christ's family tomb. It took instead a television screenwriter and an independent archaeologist who had worked on such projects as attempting to find Atlantis

106 For more information, see Josephus' *Antiquities*, 18.1.3-4 and *The Wars of the Jews*, 2.8.14.

to write this book. That is why the ossuaries discovered thirty years ago to little fanfare were routinely catalogued away with numerous similar finds until the Canadian TV screenwriter came across the idea, recruited the Atlantis hunter, and the adventure movie maker, and dug up enough circumstantial evidence to produce something like Geraldo Rivera's non-event of opening the sealed vault of Al Capone. If it worked for *The Da Vinci Code* and *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* before that and *The Passover Plot* before that, why would it not work for *The Jesus Family Tomb*? Each of these had been best sellers in their day. The profit motive is a strong one indeed. And unearthing old neglected or overlooked stories and turning them into gold is the water that turns the Hollywood power wheel.

Does the Fact That All the Witnesses Became Christians Nullify Their Testimony?

As a final objection to all the proof we have examined that Jesus Christ did indeed physically resurrect, an opposing attorney might say, "Granted the Bible has convincing data, much of which is centered on witnesses who are all sincere, moral, upstanding people. They probably did not lie, imagine, or hallucinate this experience. They did experience something – Jesus did die and no one has convincingly produced his body. Yet, can we not throw out this case because all the witnesses are biased? They all became Christians." In point of fact, this is an objection raised by David Strauss – and Celsus before him.¹⁰⁷ Strauss writes:

Secure evidence of the resurrection of Jesus, would be the attestation of it in a decided and accordant manner by impartial witnesses. But the impartiality of the alleged witnesses for the resurrection of Jesus, is the very point which the opponents of Christianity, from Celsus down to the Wolfenbüttel Fragmentist, have invariably called in question. Jesus showed himself to his adherents only: why not also to his enemies, that they too might be convinced, and that by their testimony posterity might be precluded from every conjecture of a designed fraud on the part of his disciples?¹⁰⁸

The answer to this objection is so manifestly obvious to me that I am shocked that neither Celsus nor Strauss appears to have grasped it. And that answer is: "Of course." It is, in fact, the crowning piece of evidence in the resurrection's defense: If Jesus' disenchanted, alienated followers whose reaction was typified by the denying Peter, in league with the out-and-out hostile Paul (the enemy of the Christian faith Strauss is requesting), had not all become Christians when faced with the risen Jesus Christ - if the fact of Jesus' resurrection once confronted had not demanded a positive verdict from them - then, I, for one, would certainly remain skeptical. I would want to know: Why were they not convinced? Both friend (the disciples) and foe (Paul), as well as 500 (who became "brothers and sisters") all confronted Christ and converted on the spot. How conclusive a proof is that? Not a deserter, persecutor, or skeptic left standing.¹⁰⁹ And, as history reveals down to our day, that conviction has spread around the world.

And, we should also remember this: for the New Testament writers this was not some faraway claim lost in the mists of time. All of them knew intimately about the events during the time they

¹⁰⁷ See Celsus' dismissal of the eyewitnesses as all supporters of Jesus who had become "hysterical," been "deluded by the same sorcery," "dreamt in a certain state of mind," "through wishful thinking had a hallucination," or had "wanted to impress the others by telling this fantastic tale," Hodgson, "Editor's Introduction," in Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, xxxiv.

¹⁰⁸ Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 738.

¹⁰⁹ Those who accept Luke 23:34 as true tradition, which is principally championed by the uncorrected Codex Sinaiticus before it left the scriptorium, might argue that, as for the Sanhedrin or Pilate and his men, Jesus had already forgiven those who killed him. Now in God's often employed reversal of positions strategy, they must become the learners not the teachers and turn to the common disciples (as John and Peter in Acts 4) for enlightenment. Jesus had confronted them in life, and they had rejected him. Now, if they wanted to learn the truth, they must come humbly, like the camel that must bow through the eye-of-the-needle gate, to learn from the humble in an act of humility, seeking them out. Jesus' personal post-resurrection task seems focused on pedagogy, teaching his team about the kingdom of God (see Acts 1:3); it was no longer widely evangelistic. That was to be his church's task.

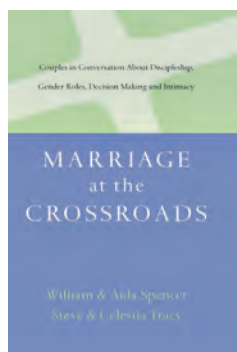
were going on. Paul himself wrote about them within 25 years of the resurrection itself. Since it is 2011 at the time of this writing, that would be like discussing something that happened in 1986. It was a time Paul lived through. These are people he met. This is something he experienced.

Practical Application

As for people of the present, of course, we continue to meet the risen Christ today. He is not far from us. With just a word to him – a prayer – his Holy Spirit can speak words of truth to us. Our lives are changed for the better when we confront him. His great resurrection power over death and a hope for the future both here and in eternity lifts our spirits up, when we ask him to pardon our doubts and the evil things we have done and beg him to take command of our lives. For, finally, the ultimate personal proof is experienced in each of us, in the court of our will, as his Spirit changes our lives with his life, love, and hope. The resurrection is a real historical fact that authenticates in our own personal experience.

This is the other side of the grim reality each honest seeker notes, when we observe that original sin – a predilection to do evil - has become personal sin. That is part of the miserific vision confronted by humanity. This is, instead, the beatific vision – the resurrection of Christ becomes personal to us – salvaging our lives from despair in this life and giving us the hope of eternal life with Christ to come.

William David Spencer is Ranked Adjunct Professor of Theology and the Arts, teaching courses in systematic and contemporary theology, prayer, marriage, theology and the arts, and other topics at Gordon-Conwell's Boston campus (CUME). In addition to coediting *Africanus Journal*, he is also the editor of *Priscilla Papers*, the academic voice of Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE), and the founding pastor of encouragement of Pilgrim Church in Beverly, MA. He is author, coauthor, or editor of eleven books, including several specifically centering on Jesus, *The Prayer Life of Jesus: Shout of Agony*, *Revelation of Love* (University Press of America) and *Dread Jesus* (SPCK: Wipf and Stock), on Rastafarian views of Jesus. His recent book, *Global Voices on Biblical Equality*, concerns the Spirit of Christ empowering the full church to minister all around the world, and his *Marriage at the Crossroads* on how to have a Christ-centered marriage.



Marriage at the Crossroads is a unique book in which Aída and William Spencer and Steve and Celestia Tracy, two couples from the differing perspectives of egalitarianism and soft complementarianism, share a constructive dialogue about marriage in practice. Covering a variety of topics like marriage discipleship, headship and submission, roles and decision making, and intimacy in marriage, this book offers a wealth of insight for counselors and pastors helping couples navigate how marriage works in theory and in practice.

Dan Brown's Jesus – Fact or Fiction?¹

Susan Sogar

With Dan Brown's famous bestseller, *The Da Vinci Code*, eager readers are regaled with the hypothetical uncovering of an age-old conspiracy committed by the Church against the real identities of Jesus and Mary Magdalene, one of his disciples. The book claims that Jesus was not divine, which will rouse many Christian readers, yet some may still be astounded to learn Brown's thesis that Mary Magdalene was not only married to Jesus, but bore him a child and had originally been selected to be the head of the church, instead of Peter. Surely, Brown must have unearthed a scandalous cover-up, seeing that, on the very first page of the novel, he provocatively asserts all of its claims as fact. Many water fountain conversations buzzed with the news in the weeks after the novel was first released, and some rejoiced that the "evil plot" of the Church had finally been revealed - and in so readable a fashion. Yet, did Brown's novel really expose an age-old conspiracy against the "feminine divine"?² Is the claim that Jesus was God a sinister cover-up to keep the Catholic Church powerful, or is the actual conspiracy an age-old attempt to deny the divinity of Jesus? This article will explore some of the "facts" from Brown's novel and what, if they were true, the consequences for Christ's work and thus for Christianity would be. But, rather than looking at the more tantalizing works Brown consulted, such as the Gnostic gospels, it will examine those sources that hold the highest factual value, because they are historically closest to the actual events: the New Testament Scriptures.

Brown's "Facts" concerning the Person of Jesus

"Because Constantine upgraded Jesus' status almost four centuries *after* Jesus' death, thousands of documents already existed chronicling His life as a *mortal* man," claims Brown.³ Earlier, on the same page, he asserts that the vast majority of educated Christians know the history of their faith, which is, that the Church, under the emperor Constantine, had made Christ into a god to gain power over believers. Yet, the teachings of Paul, an apostle of Jesus and certainly an educated man, who had studied under the well known Jewish teacher Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), clearly refute the claims of Brown's "history." Not centuries, but barely more than two decades after Christ was crucified, around A.D. 55,⁴ he wrote in Romans 9:5, "and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen."⁵ Further, between A.D. 56 and 60,⁶ he declared to the Colossians, "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him [Christ] and through him to reconcile to himself all things" (Col 1:19) and "for in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (Col 2:9). Paul, who had been a violent persecutor of Christians, whom he viewed as heretics of the Jewish faith, was so convinced that Jesus was indeed Lord and God that he willingly accepted his mission to declare this truth to the Gentiles for the rest of his life, knowing he would pay by facing tremendous opposition, hardships and finally with a violent death for his conviction (Acts 9:1-9).

The disciples, who knew Jesus personally and witnessed his daily life, were just as convinced of Christ's deity as was Paul. Hence, in John 1:1, the apostle John, close friend and follower of Jesus,

1 This revised article was first written as a paper for Systematic Theology II (Fall 2009) for Professor William David Spencer. It was revised after being presented to the Gordon-Conwell Theological Forum.

2 Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2003), 309.

3 Ibid., 234.

4 Josh McDowell, *The Best of Josh McDowell: A Ready Defense* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1993), 91.

5 All biblical quotations are from the New International Version.

6 McDowell, *Best*, 91.

called him the *word* and wrote, “In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.” The statement points back to Genesis 1:1, where word, or *logos* in the original Greek, is the “word of God by which he created the world and governs it.”⁷ One might argue that John and his fellow disciples *were* the “history” to which Brown referred above. Having lived with him, they certainly knew Jesus better than both Constantine and Brown. Yet, in Brown’s schema, they seemed to share Paul’s “lack of understanding” about their own faith. Even “Doubting” Thomas knew that Jesus was God and declared so with amazement, crying out, “my Lord and my God,” after the resurrected Christ showed him his crucifixion wounds (John 20:28). Peter called Jesus “our God and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 1:1), and the writers of Titus 2:13, Hebrews 1:8, as well as John 1:18 all also refer to Christ as God. For those who require the interpretation of the trained theologian, Millard J. Erickson enumerates many of these verses in his *Christian Theology*, also making it clear that the biblical authors were convinced that Christ was God.⁸ Apparently, none of them realized they were supposed to wait nearly 300 years for the Emperor Constantine to invent Christ’s divinity.

To make things worse for Brown’s claim, not only Jesus’ contemporaries and today’s experts, but Jesus himself seemed to be either clueless or deceitful about his solely human identity. In statement after statement Jesus alluded to himself as divine (John 10:11; 8:12; 5:27; Matt 25:31; 12:6-8; 9:3; Mark 2:5-7; Luke 5:20-21) and to his Jewish listeners he finally declared himself unequivocally as God when he claimed in John 8:58, “before Abraham was born, I AM.”

What does Brown, assuming he even knows of these verses and texts, make of so many counterarguments? He simply declares that the current biblical texts were later, altered additions that replaced older documents which spoke of a different, purely human Jesus. Yet, these “older documents” Brown refers to, originating sometime after A.D. 150, are actually later Gnostic writings - the *Gospel of Mary Magdalene* (written around A.D. 180-200), the *Gospel of Thomas* (no earlier than A.D. 150) and the *Gospel of Philip* (late A.D. 200 to early 300).⁹ Gnosticism, however, does not view Jesus as purely human at all, but tends much more in the opposite direction, rejecting everything created as evil! Meanwhile, the canonical gospels Brown simply declares as “commissioned and financed” by Constantine.¹⁰ Yet, in *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*, F.F. Bruce quotes Sir Frederic Kenyon, former director of the British Museum, as saying, “The interval between the dates of the original composition [of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John] and the earliest extant evidence [is] so small as to be negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed.”¹¹ The four canonical gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, were all completed by AD 100!¹²

It is hard not to be amused by Brown’s ignorance, when considering that the earliest “full-fledged” Christian heresy, known as docetism, actually did not deny Christ’s deity, but rather his *humanity*.¹³ Thus, the many texts Brown mentions that refer to Christ as human do indeed exist. However, these are the very same texts which Brown rejects - the actual New Testament Scriptures, which also confirmed Jesus Christ’s deity (Heb 2:14-18; Rom 5:15; 1:2-3; Acts 2:22; John 19:5; Matt 9:3; 8:9, 8:27; 13:54). Admittedly, the Docetists were closely followed by the Ebionites, who did claim that Jesus was merely human.¹⁴ Yet, this group was of lesser importance when compared to the Arians, whose heretical teachings were the real concern of the Council of Nicaea in A.D.

7 NIV Study Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973), 1626.

8 Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 705.

9 Timothy Paul Jones, *Answers to the Da Vinci Code* (Torrance, CA: Rose Publishing, 2004), 5

10 Brown, *Code*, 234.

11 F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are they Reliable?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1972), 20.

12 Jones, *Answers*, 5.

13 Erickson, *Theology*, 729.

14 Erickson, *Theology*, 711.

325.¹⁵ The Arians did not proclaim Jesus to be a mere human, but argued that his divine status was of a lesser nature than the divinity of God the Father.¹⁶ The Nicene Creed, which emerged from the council, and is much quoted by Brown as a Constantinian manipulation of the Christian faith,¹⁷ was therefore concerned with establishing Christ's deity as identical to that of the Father, not elevating him from mere humanity to deity to give political power to the Church.

Christ's Work: Could Brown's Christianity Have Survived until Now?

Americans of the late 19th through early 20th century viewed the term "Christian" as being nearly equivalent with "moral." B. B. Warfield writes of his days: "The apple-women and charwomen, the draymen and dustmen, it seems, are accustomed to employ it in a sense of which we can only say that it lies somewhere between 'sane' and 'civilized'; which signifies that which is human, normal, social and self-respecting."¹⁸ It is unlikely that the promiscuous, sexually-driven kind of "Christianity" Brown claims is historic would have impacted the world as it did. And, is it likely that Brown's "reframed" Christian history could have arrived at the Christianity that Warfield observed, a Christianity that is equated simply with good and moral behavior? Probably not, considering that Brown claims "educated Christians know the history of their faith," which, he asserts, is built on a deceptive lie, propagated after a close vote by Constantine and the church fathers.¹⁹ Could the terms "moral" or "social" or "self-respecting" apply to a belief system that is knowingly built on lies? Moreover, would believers be willing to swallow the claims that Christ made about himself which, were he merely human, would have been severely self-aggrandizing and deceitful?²⁰ To my knowledge, even few of those who do not believe in Christianity have ever leveled accusations of deceitfulness or immorality against Jesus.

Many a liberal thinker would like to accept Christ as a "good and moral teacher," whose only function was his revelatory work as a "highly significant revealer of the Father and of spiritual truth."²¹ But this option is really not available to them, since it would require a rewriting of the texts from which we extract our information about the person of Christ to circumvent the obvious conflict between the texts and the liberal claim.

The more substantial work of Christ is not found in his moral and upright character or even his love for humanity, though both are certainly unmistakable aspects of his person.²² Rather, his real mission was the tri-fold work of prophet, priest and king. In these roles, his calling was to "reveal God to humanity, reconcile God and humanity to one another, and rule ...over the whole of creation," as Erickson writes.²³ Brown's book would allow only for the teaching aspect of the prophetic work, but would render the priestly and kingly roles void. Christ's work of atonement, the redemption of humanity from the consequences of its sins, the work of a middleman between us and God would be meaningless, if he were only human. As Thomas Aquinas wrote in his *Summa Theologiae*:

Now Christ by suffering as a result of love and obedience offered to God something greater than what might be exalted in compensation for the whole offense of humanity: firstly because of the greatness of the love, as a result of which he suffered, secondly because of *the worth of the life which he lay down for a satisfaction, which was the life of God* and of a human being; thirdly, because of the comprehensiveness of

15 Ibid., 715.

16 Ibid., 711-15.

17 Brown, *Code*, 233.

18 Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1950), 480.

19 Brown, *Code*, 233.

20 John 10:11; 8:12, 58; 5:27; Matt 25:31; 9:3, Mark 2:5-7; Luke 5:20-21.

21 Erickson, *Theology*, 785.

22 Warfield, *Christ*, 481.

23 Erickson, *Theology*, 781.

his passion and the greatness of the sorrow which he took upon himself. And therefore the passion of Christ was not only sufficient but a superabundant satisfaction for the sins of the human race.²⁴

It was not the moral teachings that made Christianity a religion millions would be willing to die for, but the work Christ did as our redeemer who allows us to be restored to God and become acceptable as co-heirs to his kingdom (Rom 8:17). Christ's sacrifice was sufficient for our atonement because, as Thomas Aquinas said, of "the worth of the life which he lay down for a satisfaction, ...[which] was the life of *God* and of a human being." A mere human would have been insufficient for such a monumental task and, more importantly, would have been incapable of providing the "unblemished lamb" necessary for a sacrifice of atonement (Lev 5:14-15; 6:6-7), since humans all fall short (Rom 3:23; 5:12) of being "without defect."

Meanwhile, for Brown the concept of redemption from sin is clearly meaningless. Instead, for the early Jewish male, spiritual wholeness was reached through *Hieros Gamos*, ritualistic sex performed inside the temple with a temple prostitute, rather than through the redemptive role of Christ.²⁵ Women needed Christ even less. They were "sacred" by their mere ability to produce life from their womb, Brown confidently declares.²⁶

Indeed, temple prostitution is mentioned in the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 23:17-18 warns the Israelites *not* to engage in the practice, which was common among the Baal worshipers in neighboring states, and decries the earnings of a prostitute as "detestable." Again, Brown, who declares that "the *Hieros Gamos* ritual is not a perversion [but] a deeply sacrosanct ceremony," shows a deplorable lack of knowledge of the many Old Testament texts that readily expose his carefully crafted lies. During the time of the Old Testament kings, Baal worship had attracted some Israelites and some did commit temple prostitution. But, instead of viewing this as a form of "communion with God,"²⁷ the prophet Hosea promptly expresses God's wrath and displeasure with their disobedience (Hos 4:13-14). While sex in itself is by no means vilified by Christianity, as Brown believes,²⁸ it is a gift to humans and is not presented in the actual Christian faith as a means to salvation, redemption or even spiritual communion with God.

Conclusion

What practical steps might a believer take, who, following 1 Peter 3:15, wants gently to correct the misunderstandings of a gullible Da Vinci Code aficionado? I believe that Brown's claims rejecting the authenticity of the Scriptures, while interesting, are built on a very weak case. Thus, simply repeating the sources cited above should prove effective here. Other claims are similarly easy to refute: Did Brown's novel really reveal an age-old conspiracy against the "feminine divine"? Actually, the claim that the ancient Jews worshiped the Shekinah, which, Brown claims, was the "feminine divine,"²⁹ is so completely unsubstantiated as to be laughable. Timothy Paul Jones writes, "the term '*Shekinah*' never appears in the Old or New Testaments. It is a Hebrew term used by later rabbis to describe God's presence among his people."³⁰ Solomon's temple was not used for sanctioned temple prostitution, as Brown claims.³¹ In fact, the Old Testament specifically

24 Thomas Aquinas, quoted in Allister McGrath, *The Christian Theological Reader*, 3d ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 362-63, *emphasis mine*.

25 Brown, *Code*, 309.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid., 310.

29 Ibid., 308-12.

30 Jones, quoting Walter Elwell, ed. "Jehovah," in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker 1988), 1943-44.

31 Brown, *Code*, 309.

warns against such an act, which was committed by the pagan religions of neighboring states.³² Concerning Mary Magdalene, it is highly unlikely that Jesus was married to her or anyone else, since, while hanging on the cross, he requested that John look after his mother, but never mentions a wife (John 19:26-27). While such a marriage might not have been in any way forbidden, it would almost certainly have been mentioned in the New Testament texts at some point or another. Interestingly, Brown completely ignores Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the incredible veneration she receives in Catholic communities, which at times resembles genuine worship. This worship of a female relative of Christ certainly collapses the credibility of Brown's theory that the Catholic Church led a conspiracy against the "feminine divine."

About the claim that Jesus was declared God as a sinister cover-up to keep the Catholic Church powerful, it would probably be more accurate to say, conversely, that there was an age-old attempt to *deny the divinity* of Jesus, which, as mentioned earlier, started with the Ebionites. As stated, the Council of Nicaea wanted to establish Christ's deity as identical to that of the Father, not elevate him from mere humanity to deity to give political power to the Church. Later, the Council of Chalcedon, in A.D. 451, again had to correct the heresies of its days, but it too was not concerned with denying Christ's humanity, but rather with establishing him as being "truly human" as well as "truly God."

In my opinion, the most important piece of evidence against Brown's theory is the meaning of Christ's work for our life. Millions of Christians throughout history have come to believe in our Savior not because we are so gullible that we would swallow a lie perpetuated by a powerful, patristic Church, but because we have viscerally experienced the joy and meaning that accepting Christ's gift of redemption can give to a believer. We know and can rest assured that our faith is built on fact and not on wish fulfillment, as some would claim. Those who would propagate the claim that Christ was merely human often overlook the last chapter of the gospels. After Jesus Christ was crucified, his disciples not only mourned Christ's death, but also hid, dejected and afraid of persecution, which they rightfully believed would follow the execution of their leader (John 20:19). They had lost their faith in him and in his cause. Yet, shortly afterwards these very men went out boldly to proclaim the teachings of Christ to anyone who would listen, traveling far from their homeland, giving up all physical comfort and security and knowingly walking into certain persecution, torture and even death. Why? Because they had encountered the risen Christ! (Matt 28:9-20; Mark 16:9-18; Luke 24:13-53; John 20:19-29) They had received evidence that he was indeed God and that they had not put their trust in him in vain. They had received his command to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19; also Mark 16:15).

Without the resurrection, Christianity is truly nonsensical and could not even qualify as a satisfying means for "wish fulfillment" for anyone who is not willing to put his or her hopes in a lie. With the resurrection, however, Christianity becomes the magnificent revelation of God himself. Brown is correct that there is a genuine conspiracy: the desire of the "god of this age" that none should know the truth about Christ, lest they escape the devil's clutches (2 Cor 4:4). It is to expose this conspiracy and to give hope to the world that the disciples and millions of Christians after them have been willing to die.

Susan Sogar has had a long love for apologetics and epistemology. She completed her undergraduate degree in her forties. After spending a decade each in the business world and rearing her two daughters, she graduated Summa Cum Laude from the Honors Program at the University of Rhode Island with a Bachelor's degree in Philosophy. Susan is currently completing her Masters degree of Theology at the South Hamilton Campus of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Susan and her husband Michael have recently moved to a small ranch in the vicinity of Dallas, Texas.

32 Exod 34:15-16; Deut 23:17-18; 1Kgs 14:24; 15:12; 2 Kgs 23:7; Hos 4:14; Mic 1:7.

The Nickel Mines Massacre and the Amish Theology of the Atonement and Discipleship¹

Woodrow E. Walton

On October 2, 2006, near the Amish community of Nickel Mines in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, a man entered the West Nickel Mines School and opened fire, killing five school children and injuring five others before turning the gun on himself and shooting himself to death. The event horrified the nation when the news media carried the details of the tragedy. Television news people and journalists flocked to the area. The aftermath of this terrible act was even more stunning when the reaction of the grieving parents and the whole Amish community was reported by all the media. These Amish parents and their friends forgave the now deceased killer and extended forgiveness and mercy toward his family. This set the news people and talk-show hosts talking and discussing how anybody could forgive such a terrible deed. What kind of people are these Amish? It was the talk of the nation for weeks.

Jesus taught his disciples that, when they pray, they should ask forgiveness from God as they themselves forgave others (Matt 6:12). But is it not going too far to forgive a mass killer of children?

It is my purpose to look further into this matter of forgiveness as extended by these Amish people and to connect it with their understanding of the work of Christ referred to as the atonement and their comprehension of Christian discipleship referred to by them as *Gelassenheit*, “total yieldedness.” This German term describes one’s relationship to the crucified and risen Christ Jesus. In the eyes of the Amish and the Mennonites from which they originated in the seventeenth century, the relationship with Jesus is a totally yielded life to the risen Christ Jesus, nothing held back, nothing held in reserve. As He forgave from the Cross, so are we to forgive.

The Amish understanding of the atonement, discipleship, and forgiveness has very deep roots beginning with Jesus and extending through John Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia in the early days of the church. In a sermon on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians, Chrysostom remarked that “if Christ did not rise again, neither was he slain, and if he was not slain, our sins have not been taken away, we are still in them, and our entire faith is meaningless” (39:4). The Amish would add, “If we do not forgive, we make light of the Cross of Christ and His Resurrection.” In the late fourth and early fifth century, Theodore of Mopsuestia (died 428), proclaimed in his *Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church* that “forgiveness of sins comes through the Resurrection.” Yes, but . . . for a mass killer of innocent children?? Yes, say the Amish, and also their Mennonite forbears.

Total yieldedness to Christ Jesus and His way of doing things, as spelled out in the gospels and particularly in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, recorded between Matthew 5 and Matthew 7, was not peculiar to just the Mennonite branch of the Anabaptist reforms of the 16th century. It was peculiar to most of the Anabaptists who used the term to describe the nature of the regenerate life: a life totally yielded to God and detached from all created things that one may depend on as of greatest or ultimate value instead of dependence upon God.

Early Anabaptist leader Pilgram Marpeck wrote a tract on the idea of *Gelassenheit*, which has been lost, but reference is made to it in *The Works of Pilgram Marpack*, since edited by William

1 This revised article was first presented as a paper, November 18, 2010, at the 62nd Annual Convention of the Evangelical Theological Society in Atlanta, GA. It is dedicated in memory of Ida Roadcap Turner, great-grandmother, Old Order German Baptist Brethren; Franklin Rhodes, great uncle, Mennonite, later Church of the Brethren; and Hettie Turner Rhodes, great aunt, Church of the Brethren. All Bible quotations are from the ESV.

Klassen and Walter Klaasen.² For Marpeck, *Gelassenheit* not only meant attachment to Christ Jesus and His Way, but also that the believer in Christ also surrenders all attachment to created things, particularly when it comes to property. Adherence to things is self-centeredness which has no place in the life of the Christian and in the Church of Christ. Despite this severe judgment call, he did not argue for community of goods. Private property is good to have, but it is also something to which there should be no attachments. *Gelassenheit* entails true surrender to Jesus and to none else.

What this means for forgiveness is simply this: what Jesus *did*, we do. This does not mean “perfectionism” for either Marpeck, Simons, or Jacob Amman (1656-1730), the namesake of the Amish. The Amish are of Swiss Mennonite origin, but Amman, in 1693, took issue with Swiss Mennonite leaders Hans Reist and Benedict Schneider over what he considered to be a lack of sufficient discipline within “Mennonite” congregations. Amman was more consistent with Dutch Mennonite beliefs than with the Swiss and reflects the thinking present in Menno Simons’ 1541 “A Kind Admonition on Church Discipline.”

In reality, it would not be technically correct to indicate that Amman split from the Swiss branch of the Mennonites as neither Reist nor Schneider would refer to themselves as Mennonites but called themselves Swiss Brethren. In any case, Amman was highly influenced by Simons and the Amish faction gravitated toward a close association with the Dutch Mennonites.

Both the Dutch Mennonites and the later Amish off-shoot had a strong sense of Christ’s atoning work on the Cross as a “covering” of all sin. Their acknowledgment of receiving forgiveness from the Cross of Christ compels them to forgive. Forgiveness is not so much a discipleship issue as it is a salvation issue. Forgiveness and salvation are of the same single fabric, the warf and the woof. They are indicated as such by Jesus’ parable of the unmerciful servant as recorded in Matthew 18:21-35. The Amish, as well as the Mennonites, do not hold to either a penal theory of the atonement, nor do they adhere to a satisfaction theory. If anything, they hold on to a “narrative *Christus victor*” position, best made explicit by Mennonite J. Denny Weaver in his work *Keeping Salvation Ethical*.³

One cannot disassociate the Amish from the Mennonites as they hold to a common Anabaptist heritage. Weaver of Bluffton College, a Mennonite school in Ohio, acknowledges a commonality among Mennonites and Amish on the work of Christ in his 1996 book, *Keeping Salvation Ethical: Mennonite and Amish Atonement Theology in the Late Nineteenth Century*.⁴ Salvation is totally of God’s grace through faith, but not through faith alone, **but neither** is salvation by works either. Salvation is by grace which activates a response. The perfect example of this is when Jesus meets Zacchaeus. Salvation entered Zacchaeus’ home and Zacchaeus responded, “Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and, if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much” (Luke 19:8). Forgiveness activates forgiveness.

Forgiving and forgiveness have not lacked attention from among Christians and even from among others throughout the centuries but they have never been considered as inherent in the Atonement or integral and inseparable from the work of Christ. They differ from grace and works as in Roman Catholic thought. They differ from Luther’s understanding of salvation as by grace alone; yet they are not that dissimilar as Menno Simons and his spiritual descendants over the centuries concur with Luther, though pointing out that the “call” of grace is also a call “to follow.” To be forgiven and have one’s sin covered is to forgive. Jesus told a parable, recorded in Matthew 18:23-35, of a certain ruler who wanted to settle accounts with his servants, one of whom owed him an enormous amount of money. The man was forgiven his debt, which would have taken a

2 William Klassen and Walter Klaasen, eds., *Marpeck: A Life of Dissent and Conformity*, Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History 44 (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1973), 549.

3 J. Denny Weaver, *Keeping Salvation Ethical: Mennonite and Amish Atonement Theology in the Late Nineteenth Century*, Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History 35 (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1997).

4 Ibid.

lifetime and more to pay off. The same man soon thereafter accosted an individual who owed him but a small debt amounting to just a day's pay and had him thrown into debtor's prison. Needless to say, word got back to the ruler, who was furious at the injustice. Forgiveness necessitates forgiveness.

Anabaptist theology, particularly Mennonite-Amish, discerns and perceives a direct link between atonement and discipleship. Jesus' parable was given in response to Peter's question about how many times a person should be forgiven as though there is a limit to forgiveness. God in Christ forgave us without reservation; therefore, we forgive without reservation—no holding back.

This does not mean that forgiveness is an automatic unreflective response. It is often learned. This is where discipleship comes in, it is learned through keeping fellowship with Jesus in the pain and out of it. Johannes Moser (1826-1908), a Swiss Mennonite, recognized that there is a lifelong growth process that continues "so long as we dwell in these earthly huts. The battle between flesh and spirit continues until the angel of death removes us from the battlefield."⁵

The families who lost their children in the Nickel Mines School massacre felt pain and grief and the forgiveness was not automatic, but it was ingrained within them from youth to forgive. Moser recognized there is a learning process to forgiveness, but he was also traditionalist enough to agree with the Amish David Beiler by tying the new birth and the obedient life together into one reality: "Thus all reborn Christians must be so minded that they follow the command of Jesus Christ in all obedience."⁶ It is the frame of mind that concludes, "I have been forgiven; I, therefore, as a follower of Christ am not to seek vengeance but to seek to be able to forgive and to forgive." It is a unique frame of mind which is also tied to the Mennonite-Amish belief in non-violence. Beiler, who lived in the late 19th century, as did Moser, and Stauffer, is a spokesman for the Old Order Amish view which includes not taking vengeance.

Beiler holds that Christians are those who nonresistantly follow Jesus and submit to Him and the community of the Church, and not just those who merely relate a specific kind of spiritual experience. His stress of the necessity of conversion and the life of obedience to Christ following conversion resembles the outlook of Old Order Mennonite Jacob Stauffer (1811-1855), another major figure in America's Mennonite and Amish experience.

Randy Keeler, Assistant Professor of Religion at Bluffton University, a Mennonite school in Bluffton, Ohio, wrote that an Anabaptist understanding of the atonement "would insist that salvation cannot be reduced to a verbal assent to Jesus' lordship. . ." It includes "a life lived in accordance with the reign of God. The kingdom of God is among us because God's people live out that kingdom ethic in the here and now."⁷ Living out includes living out God's act of grace in forgiveness. Keeler cites J. Nelson Kraybill, who suggests that when communicating with another what faith in Jesus involves, one needs to describe what one does when becoming a follower of Jesus. Kraybill's "Four Spiritual Truths of a Peacemaking God" describes the faith relationship.⁸ There is no way that the Christian life which involves the act of forgiving can be considered as separate from salvation. All Anabaptists discern God's forgiveness, our salvation, our forgiving, as one single thread beginning with God and continuing in the reborn life.

This needs to be borne in mind when dealing specifically with the West Nickel Mines School incident in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. The forgiveness extended to Charles Carl Roberts IV and his own family is not peculiar to the one West Nickel Mines district of the Amish community. Children from there, East Nickel Mines, and Northeast Georgetown, attended the school. Donald Kraybill, writing of the incident in the book *Amish Grace*, reported an Amish man recalling that

5 Johannes Moser, "Der Menschen Sterblichkeit," *Der Herold der Wahrheit* 15.9 (Sept. 1878): 147. Quoted by J. Denny Weaver in *Keeping Salvation Ethical*, 92.

6 David Beiler, "Wahre Christenthum," 226, quoted by Weaver, *Keeping Salvation Ethical*, 142.

7 David Beiler, "Wahre Christenthum," 226, quoted by Weaver, *Keeping Salvation Ethical*, 142.

8 J. Nelson Kraybill, "Four Spiritual Truths of a Peacemaking God," *The Mennonite* (Nov. 4, 2003), 10.

“the grief and funeral preparations didn’t fall on the members of just one district.”⁹ It touched the lives of those in the thirty Amish schools within the four-mile radius of Georgetown.

Taking their cue from the Bible, the Amish, wherever they are, take their discipleship with Jesus seriously and beyond that of Jesus’ saying: “And when you stand praying, if you have anything against someone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses” (Mark 11:25). One Amish woman from Georgetown, Pennsylvania, appearing in silhouette on CBS’s *Early Show*, shared with the interviewer, “We have to forgive him in order for God to forgive us.”¹⁰ This extends further to not taking vengeance and exercising resistance. It adds nothing but more violence. The Mennonite-Amish view of the Atonement is a non-violent one. Jesus did not resist. He was as a lamb led to be slaughtered. By his death and his resurrection, he won his victory over violent men. Also, in the words of an Amish father, “We believe in letting our light shine, but not shining it in the eyes of other people.”

There were those who questioned the wisdom of the Amish offering such forgiveness. Jeff Jacoby, a journalist with the *Boston Globe*, was one and Cristina Odone of Great Britain’s *Observer*, another. She was less concerned about the forgiveness issued and more concerned about she saw as the fatalism she believed was inherent in Amish life. She was way off the mark and displayed her complete ignorance of Amish life, history, and belief.

The Amish are a private people, but they are, nonetheless, notable and attract attention. The Amish, of Dutch, Alsatian, and Swiss background are bi-lingual and, in some cases, tri-lingual, and those in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, have a dialect characterized as “Pennsylvania Dutch.” This lingual characteristic also distinguishes them besides their horses and buggies.

The Amish are not uniform. There is a diversity, though they adhere very strongly to a unity of Christian belief as laid out in the Dordrecht Confession of Faith in 1632 and adopted April 21, 1632, by a Dutch Mennonite Conference held at Dordrecht, Holland. There are 18 articles of faith from “Of God and the Creation of All Things” to “The Resurrection of the Dead, and the Last Judgment.” It was originally signed by individuals from seventeen different regions. The Amish, it needs to be remembered, are of Mennonite origin and reflect a more plain lifestyle, and the differences among the Amish are of degree, not kind. There are the more progressive Amish and those referred to as Old Order. Since there is no hierarchical structure, decisions are made locally, and, with 1800 different Amish communities, presently, across the United States of America and Canada, diversity is assured. Beyond the 18 Articles of the Dordrecht Confession, there is also a long history of persecution and a rejection of vindictiveness or getting even. Getting even or seeking vengeance only breeds more violence.

The Mennonite and Amish are often characterized as holding strongly to the teachings of Jesus as they are especially stated within the Sermon on the Mount recorded in Matthew 5-7. That is true to a certain extent, but leaves out their comprehension of the work of Christ on the cross and the reborn life. Carrying out Jesus’ teachings in the Sermon on the Mount apart from the new birth occasioned by God’s grace is impossible.

All other considerations of forgiveness as extended by the Amish miss the mark. The remarks and criticisms discussed by journalists, onlookers, and many scholars, social workers, and psychologists, leave out the equation of Christ’s words from the Cross, which was itself a cruel, unjustified, violent act: “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

One need only to recall another notorious incident coming out of World War II. While imprisoned in a Nazi concentration compound, Simon Wiesenthal was released one day from his work detail to attend the bedside of a dying member of the Secret Service. Haunted by the crimes

9 Donald B. Kraybill, Steven M. Nolt, David L. Weaver-Zercher, *Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/John Wiley & Sons, 2007), 7.

10 Donald B. Kraybill, *Amish Grace*, 45.

in which he was a participant, the soldier wanted to confess to—and gain forgiveness from—a Jew. Faced with the choice between compassion and revulsion, justice and injustice, silence and truth, Wiesenthal, said nothing and walked away. That situation haunted Wiesenthal for years afterwards. Had he done the right thing? He wrote a book entitled *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness*, first published in 1969, then reissued in 1998 by Glyde publishers. In the second half of *The Sunflower*, a panel of respondents was presented with a wide range of responses and answers as to whether Wiesenthal did the right thing by his silence and walking away. Roman Catholic priest and educator Theodore Hesburgh, responded: “If asked to forgive, by anyone for anything, I would forgive because God would forgive.”¹¹ Radio talk show host Dennis Prager, who considered himself a devoted Jew, disagreed: “People can never forgive murder, since the one person who can forgive is gone, forever.” There were other responses and reactions. I read the book soon after hearing Ravi Zacharias mention it in an address at the 1994 North American Conference for Itinerant Evangelists held in Louisville, Kentucky.

What is interesting is to contrast and compare the two incidents. Kraybill does so in his book on the Nickel Mines Massacre, *Amish Grace*. While Kraybill raises the forgiveness issue in both the Wiesenthal and the Nickel Mines cases, he does not comment on what I feel is critical. Except for Hesburgh’s statement, “I would forgive because God would forgive,” there is an over-riding concern with accountability and settling scores in *The Sunflower*. The upshot of the Wiesenthal incident was the creation of The Simon Wiesenthal Center in November 1977 in Los Angeles and the New York Tolerance Center. Wiesenthal fought for human rights and on behalf of the Jewish people to make things right. He is rightfully honored, but there is an unexpressed bitterness at the core. There is no forgiveness at work but a drive to promote toleration and nothing more.

But at the Nickel Mines School, there is no desire to get even or to rectify a wrong. There is a forgiveness which surpasses all comprehension, as it recalls an uncalled for and unjustified execution of an innocent man outside the gates of Jerusalem. The Amish and the Mennonites pattern their lives after the Crucified Jesus of Nazareth and base their lives and beliefs upon the resurrection of the Crucified One and believe in not responding in kind. They do not create Centers to remember their history of persecution or to promote toleration, as toleration has nothing to do with the promotion of God’s love among people, but getting along with others with minimal friction.

Forgiveness, Amish-style, has nothing to do with overlooking a wrong but has everything to do with looking past it. There is no vengeance. In the Amish Christian’s consciousness is what John L. Ruth calls “the cross of the innocent martyr—the sacrificial lamb.” It is “a guide to the nature of reality.”¹² At the start of their history in Europe, the Anabaptist forbears of the Mennonites and the later Amish faced, and then laid aside the option of taking up “God’s sin-avenging sword.” Vengeance is a divine, not a human prerogative.

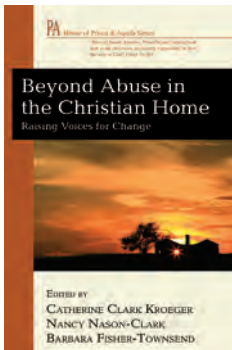
Johann Christophe Arnold, in an updated and expanded 2009 edition of an earlier work done in the twentieth century and retitled *Why Forgive?*, offered a comment upon the Nickel Mines Amish response to the massacre which is worth quoting at the close: “. . . as far as open anger or hostility goes, the Amish hold, as they have for centuries, that it is destructive—a waste of energy that will hold them hostage and ultimately kill them, just like that daughters were held hostage and killed by someone else’s anger. To these devout followers of Jesus, the only answer is the one he offered on the Cross: ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’”¹³ And that takes us back to the atonement.

11 Quoted by Donald Kraybill in *Amish Grace*, 60.

12 John L. Ruth, *Forgiveness: A Legacy of the West Nickel Mines Amish School* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 2007), 36.

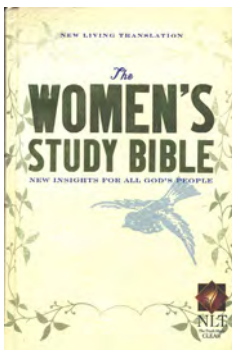
13 Johann Christoph Arnold, *Why Forgive?*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2009), 208. Originally published by The Plough Publishing House of Church Communities International, Rifton, NY.

Woodrow E. Walton is a retired professor, seminary dean, and pastor living in Shattuck, Oklahoma. An ordained Assemblies of God minister, he received a B.A. from Texas Christian University (1957); a B.D. [M.Div.] from Duke Divinity School (1960); an M.A. from the University of Oklahoma (1971), and a D.Min. from the School of Theology and Missions of Oral Roberts University (1993). In 1985, 1986, and 2001, he served overseas in short-term mission work, the last time in Mozambique. He holds memberships in the Evangelical Theological Society, the American Association of Christian Counselors, the International Society of Frontier Missions, and the American Society of Church History. He and his wife, Joy, have two grown children and two grown grandchildren.



Beyond Abuse in the Christian Home: Raising Voices for Change presents an accurate, faith-based analysis of abuse in the Christian family context. As it provides resources to deal with this problem, the contributors come from various faith traditions, work in different contexts, and see the issue in part based on their own narrative and training. Yet, despite their differences, they are unanimous that violence has no place in the home.

Dr. Catherine Kroeger was a Ranked Adjunct Professor of Classical and Ministry Studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and frequently taught at CUME.



The Women's Study Bible explores questions that have special relevance for women. What was daily life like for women in biblical times? Each biblical book is accompanied by an introduction, running annotations that highlight passages that specifically address women and women's issues and clarify lessons that women might draw from more general passages. This edition uses the New Living Translation and includes New Oxford Bible maps and a helpful index. It is edited by Catherine Clark Kroeger and Mary J. Evans and has many contributors from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (professors and alumnae).



Dr. Claude Alexander
D. Min. '04 &
Gordon-Conwell Trustee



**“The D.Min.
Program allowed me
to focus on my
passion.”**

Preaching is a passion for Dr. Claude Alexander, the busy Senior Pastor of The Park Ministries, a 10,000-member, three-campus church in the Charlotte, North Carolina. When he learned he could earn a specialized D.Min. degree in Homiletics in his own community and under a preeminent preaching authority, he enrolled at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

“The pace of my work was such that the program was appealing,” he says. “I was also intrigued by the seminary’s commitment to the Scriptures and to the mission of producing effective leaders for the Church. And the opportunity to study under Dr. Haddon Robinson, believed to be the foremost authority on preaching expository sermons, was a dream come true.”

Dr. Alexander says he benefited from the program’s collegial environment, in which students learned from one another, and from the personal and pastoral interest of Dr. Robinson and the seminary staff. “We were shepherded. They took a personal interest not just in my academic performance, but also in my physical well-being and the well-being of the ministry.”

For more information about the Doctor of Ministry Program at Gordon-Conwell call: 1.800.816.1837 or visit us at www.gordonconwell.edu/dmin

**Gordon-Conwell
Theological Seminary**



SOUTH HAMILTON | CHARLOTTE | BOSTON | JACKSONVILLE

THINK Theologically | **ENGAGE** Globally | **LIVE** Biblically

Review of *Closing the Window: Steps to Living Porn Free* by Tim Chester (Downers Grove, IL.: InterVarsity, 2010)

Alexander J. Wei

I always welcome books like this one, which help one to deal with sexual matters from a Christian perspective. It has been said that Christians have an unhealthy attitude towards sex. We certainly find it difficult to talk about and write about sex, with the result that people get into trouble, through lack of honest instruction and shyness about asking. We fear that sex is dynamite, and it is; but it would probably be less so if we courageously dealt with these subjects.

Most of the examples in the book are of men. Chester explains that he (probably wisely) does not talk to women alone about their sexuality (11). He admits that women struggle with the problem, too, and I would imagine that women would profit from his book, but be warned of this aspect. The intended audience is Christians, mainly men, who desire to be free from addiction to pornography. The book establishes the undesirability of pornography from sociological, anecdotal, and biblical standpoints and outlines steps to freedom from it. Tim Chester has a Ph.D. from the University of Wales. He is a church planter and Bible teacher. His extensive footnotes include items from Martin Luther, Augustine, Chesterton, C.S. Lewis, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Antoine de Saint-Exupery, Naomi Wolf, Gordon MacDonald and John Piper.

Tim Chester is from the United Kingdom and his ministry is there, so it is not surprising that his language and examples are from this context. It sometimes takes one aback, as on p. 70 he says, “So you’re sexually pure in God’s sight. When God looks at you he doesn’t see ‘*a sad wanker*’” (italics mine). In the UK, the root meaning of the word “wanker” is someone who masturbates, but it is also colloquial for someone who is pitiable.

Chester stresses two problems with the modern environment (7): the modern permissive attitude and the new technologies that make porn more undetectable and almost impossible to stop. For the latter point, he references Dr. Alvin Cooper’s “triple-A engine”: accessibility, anonymity and affordability.

Chester also blames porn for bad cultural attitudes. Here I would take slight issue with his analysis: it is not porn alone that causes this but a general culture often associated with Hollywood. On page 19, “Porn Wrecks Your View of Women,” Chester says that a man comparing the woman in his life with the porn stars finds his own woman lacking. I would agree with this, but add that movies, television and so on also contribute to the problem.

In this connection, Chester has an amusing story on page 116. A friend of actress Julianne Moore was looking at a glossy magazine. She said, “Why don’t I look like that?” Then she looked closer. It WAS herself, but touched up so she did not recognize herself at first!

With all this new technology, Chester is a believer in accountability software that sits on your computer or mobile device and regularly emails to a designated sponsor or two a report on porn sites you have visited. Page 95 has a number of useful suggestions, including the names of two such softwares: Covenant Eyes and XXXchurch.com’s x3watch. On page 15, Chester tells about a man who confessed to using porn. After praying, Chester suggested accountability software. The man was crestfallen, replying, like a modern-day St. Augustine: “Lord, make me chaste, but not yet!”

Chester has quite a number of practical suggestions (e.g., 10, 41, 76, 89, 93, 95, 109, 110, 112). For example, he mentions that churches should teach on sex at least once a year (10). I imagine that most of us are way behind by that standard.

Chester mentions something that I also heard from a friend, so the story is widely known: one Urbana, George Verwer of Operation Mobilization openly admitted his addiction to porn to

all there (76). This sort of openness is what we need, and I am certain a lot of good came from Verwer's courage, but he is unfortunately rare.

Chester mentions the major problem on page 54: He asks, why do we not turn to the Bible or prayer? Because they do not seem as entertaining. The church is unable to help people to see as God sees all this, how attractive is purity and how pernicious is porn, and although Chester has many helpful hints, that problem still exists.

I would recommend Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary sell this book in its bookstore, and that CUME students buy and read it. I would recommend this book to the following courses: Preaching, Understanding Youth Culture, Pastoral Care in Crisis Situations, Educational Ministry of the Church, and Church and Community.

Alexander J. Wei is a graduate of Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Chemical Engineering and works in Software Engineering. He was once a Special Student at Gordon-Conwell, and took several courses, including Biblical Hebrew and Greek. He is an elder of the Presbyterian Church, USA and is very active in the First United Presbyterian Church of Cambridge, MA and the Presbytery of Boston.



Reconnecting the Church: Finding Our Place in Complex Culture

Most churches are ministering in constantly changing communities. Many cultures, languages, religions, races, ideologies, lifestyles, and increased inroads of secularization in our society, have become a permanent part of our ministry context. This book has termed this diversity "complex culture." Each local community has its own unique composition of this complexity, and it has resulted in a certain degree of disconnection.

On the one hand, people in "complex culture" often feel as though they have no common ground with the Church. On the other hand, it can be intimidating for the Church to attempt interaction with people with whom it has less and less in common.

"Reconnecting the Church" is intended to come alongside the local church to help the reader to

look and listen in ways that uncover needs, and formulate means their local church can use to engage, and to serve its local community. The action/reflection projects at the end of each chapter describe actionable projects, and give guidance for reflection on the results.

J. Timothy Kauffman is a retired pastor and professor. He has taught graduate courses in pastoral formation, urban studies, and leadership as an adjunct professor at Azusa Pacific University's Haggard Graduate School of Theology, Gordon-Conwell Seminary (CUME), and others.

Review of *No Stones: Women Redeemed from Sexual Addiction* by Marnie C. Ferree, 2d ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010)

Nancy West

Marnie Ferree bravely and vulnerably exposes herself as she masterfully and sensitively writes a long overdue book on a subject that has been avoided as taboo. Sexual addiction is not only a male disorder but one that is pervasive among women as well. Every woman who struggles with this secret should read this book to know that she can be set free. There is hope in God's grace. Christian counselors, pastors, leaders of support recovery groups and anyone involved in healing ministries also need to educate themselves with the understanding of the root causes, the pain and scars of the addiction, and the tools to help support women as they struggle to walk out of this darkness and shame to seek wholeness in sexuality and relationships as God intended.

The title of the book, *No Stones*, is taken from John 8 when the teachers of the law and Pharisees brought a woman to Jesus who had been caught committing adultery. The law said she was to be stoned, but Jesus said: "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her" (8:7 NIV). Today we live in a great cultural crisis concerning sexuality. Women are still shamed, shunned, and stoned. They are thirsty to receive that "living water" that Jesus offered another woman in John 4:14 who was clearly also sexually addicted. The Samaritan woman had had five husbands and was now living with a sixth man. Sexual addiction is as old as the fall of humanity. Yet, still a woman who is a sexual addict has to hide her shame in lies and secrets, unlike a man who has multiple ways to seek help without stones being thrown or feeling that he has to hide his secret forever. Sexual addiction can involve a large variety of sins of self gratification in any sexual activity. It is not about sex. It is an intimacy disorder that is a desperate search for love and connection and to avoid feeling abandoned. It has been defined as an addiction, "a pathological relationship with a mood-altering substance or behavior."¹ God created us in His image and to be in relationship with Him. This book reminds us of God's design for sexual integrity and wholeness and provides hope through God's grace.

At conception, if God's perfect plan were in place, children would be born dependent upon God and their unconditionally loving, nurturing, and caring parents. Children would be born trusting, accepting, and forgiving others. They would be playful, teachable, curious, and innocent. In touch with their feelings and able to express them, children are vulnerable. Unfortunately, all families have some dysfunction. Even a child developing in her/his mother's womb can experience the emotions of a mother who was raped or not wanting the child and considering an abortion. Children have different sensitivities and experiences throughout their lifetime but those who experience the abuses, traumas, absence of love and whose basic needs not being met have basic controlling lies about life and who they are. Only God can redeem and heal these.

The author's story began at three years old when her mother died of cancer. Her father was a pastor and buried himself with his work while she and her two older brothers were primarily raised by a grandmotherly helper who lived with them. When the author was five years old, a trusted family friend became a father figure in her life and central figure in her home. The relationship was very much supportive to begin with, but gradually he became so close to her that, by the time she was fourteen years old, they were having intercourse. The stories of women who become sex addicts often contain sexual abuse or trauma. Sex addicted women all have inner child unmet needs of abandonment. They go through life with a desperate search for love, touch, approval, affection, and affirmation to fill the void. Throughout the book, Marnie Ferree recounts her story as well as the accounts of many other women she has helped through counseling and explains the reason she has been so thorough.

1 43, citing Patrick Carnes, *Out of the Shadows* (Minneapolis: CompCare Publishers, 1983), 4.

The author spent years writing her book after she had walked through the long and difficult journey of recovery. She became a Marriage and Family Therapist and established the Bethesda Workshops in Nashville, TN to be able to reach out to everyone who has had their lives controlled by this addiction. Her book is an extension of that work, to reach out to an even wider audience. The website www.bethesdaworkshops.org and email mferree@bethesdaworkshops.org give those looking for help a place to find resources. Her book is full of references to authors and researchers and their statistics showing the prevalence and impact of the problem in United States society. This is a rich resource not only for women, but also for their families and friends, as well as for professionals, churches, and support groups.

The problems of women caught in adultery are spelled out in six chapters and the root causes in another five. The solution to these problems covers seven chapters, and there is no stone unturned throughout the book. A woman can not simply decide to be an acting addict no longer. She must first want to be healed and be led to the healing grace and love of her Heavenly Father and recognize his presence and acceptance in her life from the womb on. She must trust in those who are willing to walk with her through her healing process, which should include a counselor, as well as healthy women who have already taken the journey. The author believes that some form of a Twelve Step program is a necessity and on going and she suggests several options to look for in any given area. Finding the right support group presents the greatest challenge, because most women find they are the only female in a group of men and often do not feel understood or safe enough to stay. This is why it is imperative for support group leaders to study *No Stones* carefully. There are so many prodigal daughters longing for affirmation, to be cared for, touched, held, and to be heard and understood. But, first they need to find the embrace of a loving God and receive His grace.

In my practice, I deal with women and men who have been sexually, emotionally, and physically abused and have worked with many who are sex addicts. The men will come to me with that as the presenting problem, but most women have hidden it so well they do not admit to it until I see all the past issues that would suggest this is a problem for them. From my own experiences in this ministry of counseling, I cheer this book from cover to cover. I hope that the bookstores carry it and that it be used in the appropriate classes at Gordon-Conwell and CUME. Any course on human sexuality should have it as recommended reading.

Nancy West is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and Licensed Mental Health Counselor. She received her Masters in Counseling while administrating the Counseling Program at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary from 1990-2000.

WIPF & STOCK

An Imprint of WIPF and STOCK Publishers

199 West 8th Avenue, Ste. 3, Eugene, OR 97401
Telephone (541) 344-1528 • Fax (541) 344-1506
Visit our Web site at www.wipfandstock.com

The Cat & the Toaster

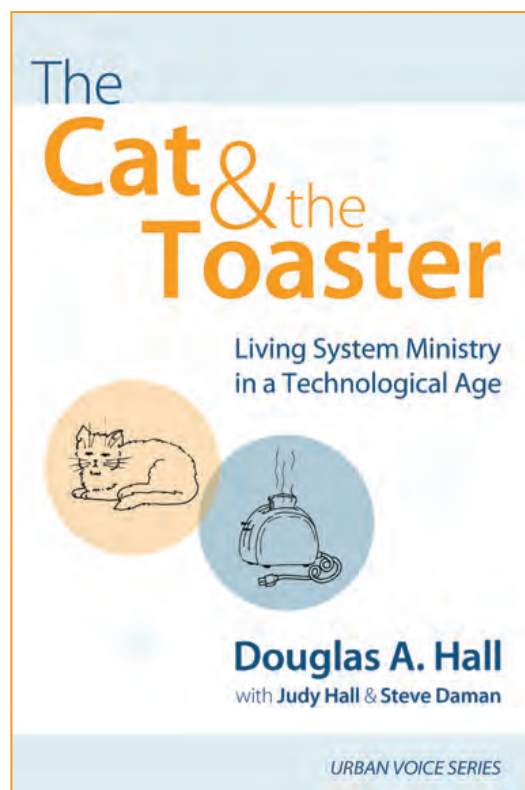
Living System Ministry in a Technological Age
Douglas A. Hall with Judy Hall & Steve Daman

Living system ministry is an approach to Christian ministry in the Western world that recognizes the differences between *cats*, the world God created, and *toasters*, the world we create using our technology and our capacities, limited as they are.

The church is the Body of Christ, a living system. Neighborhoods, cities, and cultures, too, are complex and interrelated living social systems. Why, then, would we try to do God's work in a church or social system using tools and methods designed for non-living systems? We do it because our culture is very organizationally—and technologically—centered. We have grown accustomed to thinking of our social contexts not as living systems, but as things we can easily measure and control.

Embracing both perspective and procedure, Living System Ministry is about doing better ministry by seeing a better picture of what exists in the total system. Like farmers, rather than technicians, we learn to be involved in and to be “in tune with” what causes fruitfulness. We never cause fruit to happen. God does! But as our work becomes better aligned with what God is already doing in his complex, living-system environment, there is an explosion of life. We discover the fruit that remains.

Writing from his forty-five years of experience as an urban ministry practitioner in Boston, Dr. Doug Hall introduces us to an approach to missions that recognizes the lead role of God's larger, living social systems as powerful engines for doing far more in our world than we can even begin to imagine.



ISBN 13: 978-1-60899-270-6 / 390 pp. / \$43 / paper

Douglas A. Hall is the President of the Emmanuel Gospel Center in Boston (www.egc.org), where he has served with his wife, Judy Hall, since 1964. He is also an adjunct professor of urban ministry with Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Order via phone (541) 344-1528, fax (541) 344-1506, or e-mail us at orders@wipfandstock.com.

Review of *Rooted in Jesus Christ: Toward a Radical Ecclesiology* by Daniel Izuzquiza (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009)

Adonis Vidu

The book under review is a political theology and ecclesiology that addresses some crucial questions and issues facing Christians who care deeply about the cause of justice in our globalized, late-modern world. Izuzquiza is a Jesuit scholar and activist, the director of Pueblos Unidos, a Jesuit social center that works for the integration of migrants in Madrid. His writing is thus steeped in the concrete experience of the poor and the displaced. Yet, this book will most likely be difficult to read for those somewhat unaccustomed to the intricacies of current academic theology. The intended audience of the book, therefore, is the theologian, but also the thoughtful practitioner.

The main thesis of the book is that the church's transformative presence in the public square is most effective and authentic when the particularity of Christian practices and beliefs is affirmed, rather than avoided. The mandated fight for justice in an unequal world necessarily presupposes that the church and its political theologians openly embrace the distinctiveness of the Christian gospel instead of opting for a neutral position in the public square.

As such, the book joins the conversation about the place and behavior of Christian theologians in the public square. One of the issues is whether the church's presence as a dialogue partner in the public square requires the bracketing of specific religious convictions in the search for a neutral political focus. Whereas liberals give an affirmative answer to that question, Izuzquiza strongly rejects this option, believing that only by being rooted in Jesus Christ can the church be an effective witness and transformative influence in society.

While this position is certainly not unique, Izuzquiza intends to show how such an embrace of the particularity of the Christian worldview need not lead to fideistic sectarianism, or immodest Christian triumphalism, but can issue in significant cultural transformation.

Izuzquiza's defense of particularity serves as a direct, though not destructive, criticism of liberation theology, which seems to have morphed into an almost secularized form of revolutionary activism. Life is still left in liberation theology, Izuzquiza thinks, as long as the poor will be with us, but it must recover its theological roots. This reconstruction of liberation theology must proceed by consolidating its four original and lasting contributions: it must maintain the starting point in a reflection on the practices; it must reaffirm the primacy of God; it must center on the experience of the martyrs; and it must continue to insist on the preferential option for the poor - the way forward it sought through an ecumenical engagement with Lindbeck, Milbank and Yoder.

The point of this conversation is to demonstrate that, although each of these affirms some version of a strong Christian particularity, neither necessarily leads to those forms of isolationism which are rightly perceived as ineffective. While Lindbeck rightly affirms the priority of the Christian praxis, he needs to give more attention to the universal claim of the Gospel. In turn, Milbank's scathing attack on sociology leads to a sense of the self-sufficiency of the Christian tradition. Against this, Izuzquiza correctly stresses the need for openness to criticism from the direction of secular discourses such as sociology. While the social sciences are never neutral, they are much needed conversation partners, and, indeed, tactical agents for social change inspired by a specifically Christian strategy/worldview. Finally, Yoder's stress on peace and consensus needs a Niebuhrian supplement, since "it may lead us to overlook the reality of conflicts caused by structural situations of injustice" (113).

The theological motivation for these adjustments lies in nothing else than the incarnation, which is a synthesis between the particular and the universal, as Izuzquiza's favorite catchphrase has it: "In Jesus, there is no room for the merely abstract, nor for the merely particular." While the

incarnation is a particular historical event, it is one with universal significance. But this significance is not universal in that it could be captured in abstract propositions which correspond to a static reality (the merely abstract). Rather, it is universal in that it sets in motion the church, as the community which brings about the eschatological transformation of reality. Thus, “Christian communities create a new reality as they worship, pray, serve, and live. But they can do so only if they keep faithful to their own shared and inherited expression, if there is correspondence between what they say and what they do. If this is so, for example, when Christians say ‘Jesus is Lord’ they are actually *creating* a new reality, an alternative to every empire” (38).

This universal claim, on the other hand, is not to be achieved through theocratic coercion, but through humble presence and “revolutionary nonviolence.” “In this sense,” he writes, “my proposal coincides with the posture of conservative Christians in that we affirm our specific identity. It coincides also with that of progressive Christians in its political commitment on behalf of the impoverished. I would like to urge the former to refrain from isolating themselves in their identity ghetto, and I urge the latter to avoid diluting themselves and letting themselves be swept away by currents that are culturally dominant and politically correct” (230).

There are many other topics that are touched on, including a plea for a non-violent resistance, the Eucharist as the creation of an alternative reality, much more than I can possibly do justice to (or even mention here).

Evangelicals reading the book will find much to appreciate: from the centrality of justice, to a critique of Catholic fundamentalism which identifies the body of Christ with a specific historical formula (229), to an almost evangelical appreciation for a “deep personal relationship with [Jesus]” (130). The questions that remain for me have mostly to do with the felicity of absolute non-violence. I cannot help but put myself in the position of the violently and militarily oppressed, whose only possible chance for freedom lies in military action. Can I afford to condition my response to injustice on whether this response is itself perfectly just? Would the oppressed really want me to take the time to entertain such scruples? Izuzquiza, together with the more recent Catholic tradition, is absolutely right to challenge the existence of any modern just war. But absolute justice is a possibility for God alone. While we must lament the necessity of such types of action, and repent for them, it may be the best human and concrete way to pursue justice in a broken world.

Adonis Vidu (Ph.D., University of Nottingham, UK) is Associate Professor of Theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He has published two books: *Postliberal Theological Method* and *Theology After Neo-Pragmatism*. He is currently working on a cultural hermeneutics of atonement and justice theories (Baker Academic 2011). His other interests and long-term projects include *Aspects of God and the World: A Critical Theology*.

WIPF & STOCK

An Imprint of WIPF and STOCK Publishers

199 West 8th Avenue, Ste. 3, Eugene, OR 97401
Telephone (541) 344-1528 • Fax (541) 344-1506
Visit our Web site at www.wipfandstock.com

Accepted in the Beloved

A Devotional Bible Study for Women
on Finding Healing and Wholeness
in God's Love

Leslie Ann McKinney

Are you struggling with fully accepting that God loves you?

If you or someone you know has suffered abuse, you are not alone. Abuse of women is a global problem. One out of every four Christian women suffers from physical, emotional, spiritual, economic, or sexual abuse. Women who have suffered abuse often find it difficult to experience God's love.

Accepted in the Beloved is a Bible study that will help and encourage women who desire to know and experience God's love and acceptance, and will help equip pastors or pastoral caregivers to support and assist survivors of abuse.

The six-lesson journey through *Accepted in the Beloved* will encourage healing, growth, and transformation. Each lesson includes three different sections: Learning God's Truth, to enlighten the mind through a study of the truths in God's word and to accurately illuminate the character of our loving Creator; Experiencing God, to encourage a deeper experience of God's presence through contemplative exercises that develop heart knowledge of God's truth and foster spiritual transformation; and Sharing God's Love, to encourage women to reach out beyond themselves as they apply what they have learned from the study to their lives and relationships.

With an encouraging tone and transformative content, *Accepted in the Beloved* will help women find healing and wholeness in the love of the crucified Lord.

PA House of Prisca & Aquila Series

"Having heard Apollos, Priscilla and Aquila took him aside and more accurately expounded to him the way of God" (Acts 18:26)

Accepted in the Beloved

A Devotional Bible Study for Women on
Finding Healing and Wholeness in God's Love



LESLIE ANN
McKINNEY

ISBN 13: 978-1-55635-936-1 / 56 pp. / paper

Leslie Ann McKinney serves as Pastor of Community at Pilgrim Church of Beverly, Massachusetts, a union church of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and of the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference. She specializes in women's ministry and is a spiritual director. She is a board member of Life Together International, a nonprofit ministry encouraging biblical justice, unity, and reconciliation.

ORDER INFORMATION

E-MAIL: housepriscaaquila@comcast.net

PHONE: (978) 646-4084

MAIL: House of Prisca and Aquila
10 Maple Street, S. Hamilton, MA 01982

ALTERNATE ORDER INFORMATION

E-MAIL: lamckinney@verizon.net

PHONE: (781) 595-1001

MAIL: Rev. Dr. Leslie McKinney
5 Shelton Road, Swampscott, MA 01907

Retail Cost: \$10

Discounts will be given for purchases of 10 books or more.

Review of *Why Business Matters to God (And What Still Needs to Be Fixed)* by Jeff Van Duzer (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010)

David W. Gill

Jeff Van Duzer is Dean of the School of Business and Economics at Seattle Pacific University (SPU). Prior to his appointment at SPU in 2001, Van Duzer was an attorney in private practice for twenty years. It must be noted that SPU has one of the largest and best business schools of any Christian university. More than two dozen faculty work very consciously and collaboratively at integrating Christian faith and values with the business education they deliver to a multi-faith body of MBA students from Microsoft, Boeing, and other firms in their region – as well as to their undergraduate business majors. The impressive intentionality and the accomplishments of this faculty are due in no small part to Dean Van Duzer's leadership. (Reviewer disclosure: I have never been part of the regular SPU faculty but I have often given lectures and taught courses as an adjunct professor).

The purpose of Van Duzer's book is to explore anew and afresh the way biblical theology can illuminate and guide our understanding of the business enterprise. Deep engagement with Scripture, regular no-holds-barred interaction with his faculty colleagues, business world experience, and judicious use of faith and work writers such as Paul Stevens and Laura Nash are the primary sources for Van Duzer's perspectives.

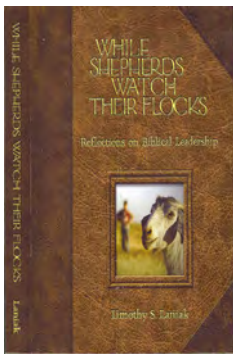
Van Duzer's first three chapters (occupying the first half of the book), "In the Beginning," "Broken," and "In the End," indicate his overarching canonical framework from creation to fall to redemptive/eschatological conclusion of the work of God, through which he offers an interpretation of the meaning of work and business. For newcomers to the topic, Van Duzer's discussions are a reliable summary of some good insights. For those familiar with these themes, the discussions will seem more obvious and rather thin. For example, the discussion of the impact of the "fall" on work does not very fully or systematically unpack the details and dynamics of what is described in Genesis 3. The work of God as "sustaining providence" and "upholder-of-his-creation-despite-the-fall" is also underplayed. The redemptive side of work is inadequately developed in terms of the call to heal the hurting and sick and fix what is broken. Lots of space is given to theories about the status of contemporary human work in the hereafter. It is all interesting and valuable -- even if selective rather than comprehensive.

The second half of Van Duzer's book moves toward business world applications, though he continues to take time to probe occasional biblical-theological variations and hauls out the over-used, somewhat misleading typology of H. Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture* (misleading because its categories developed historically in contexts which no longer exist -- there is no more Christendom, no killing of Anabaptists, no invitation to be a ruling cultural elite, etc.).

Van Duzer's approach discusses the redemptive, service side of business, not just the creational side which can sometimes lose sight of the brokenness of our world. He acknowledges the importance of profits (without them we are out of business and everybody loses) but stresses that profit maximization alone cannot be the purpose of a healthy, God-honoring business. One wishes for Van Duzer and other authors to engage more explicitly and fully the need for community-based entrepreneurship, even small business development, both for the provision of basic goods and services and for the personal and social meaning to be gained. Much of the faith at work literature leans toward the upper echelons of executive leadership -- or at least toward the small populations who have a choice about where and how to work. What about the millions of people with no work, no food, no hope? The church spans the whole economic and vocational range and needs help to think in those broader, more inclusive terms.

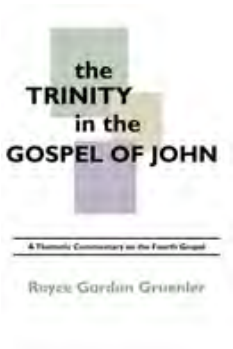
But in the end, Van Duzer's book gets high marks for its quality and depth and well as its accessibility, especially for thoughtful Christians working in, and managing, businesses of all sorts. My only quibbles are those of someone who has read fifty other books (and is writing his own) on this topic.

David W. Gill (Ph.D., Southern California) came to Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Fall 2010 as Mockler-Phillips Professor of Workplace Theology and Business Ethics and Director of the Mockler Center for Faith and Ethics in the Workplace. He has been professor of Christian Ethics or Business Ethics in the San Francisco and Chicago areas the past thirty years. He is the author of seven books, including *Becoming Good: Building Moral Character* (InterVarsity, 2000), *Doing Right: Practicing Ethical Principles* (InterVarsity, 2004), and *It's About Excellence: Building Ethically Healthy Organizations* (Executive Excellence Publishers, 2008).



While Shepherds Watch Their Flocks: Reflections on Biblical Leadership brings to life the realities and rewards of leadership by looking at the ancient image of shepherds. It offers an opportunity to think biblically about one's calling to serve Jesus Christ, the expectations that come with being a shepherd leader, and the compassionate and courageous commitment needed to provide for, protect, and guide those under our care. "With a shepherd's heart and a scholar's mind, Laniak goes beyond Phillip Keller's devotional classic, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, and raises our job description to a divine standard" (Dr. Haddon W. Robinson).

Dr. Timothy S. Laniak serves as the Dean and Professor of Old Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Charlotte.



The Trinity in the Gospel of John: A Thematic Commentary on the Fourth Gospel. No book in the Bible says more about the Trinity than the Gospel of John. Of the innumerable commentaries published on this much loved Gospel, few have focused on this central theme. Devoted Bible students will find in this thematic commentary a dimension to the Gospel of John they may have noticed only vaguely. As they follow the author through this Gospel chapter by chapter, they will acquire a far deeper understanding of the Triune God, whom they serve because he has served them.

Royce Gordon Gruenler is Professor of New Testament Emeritus, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Review of *Pneuma and Logos: The Role of the Spirit in Biblical Hermeneutics* by John W. Wyckoff
(Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2010)

Woodrow E. Walton

Pneuma and Logos: The Role of the Spirit in Biblical Hermeneutics is the latest work of Dr. John W. Wyckoff on the person and work of the Holy Spirit. A prior work is his *Roots of Pentecostal Belief*. The Professor of Bible and Theology and Graduate Chair of Theological Studies at Southwestern Assemblies of God University in Waxahachie, Texas, Wyckoff earned his Ph.D. under the direction of Dr. Robert Patterson at Baylor University (Waco, TX). Originally his doctoral dissertation, *Pneuma and Logos* examines how the Holy Spirit works with the biblical interpreter and the nature of the Spirit's role in relationship to the interpreter (4). Wyckoff examines the biblical metaphors for the Holy Spirit as "teacher," "adviser," and "guide" in chapter four after first giving a historical survey (chs. 1 and 2) and providing in chapter 3 an analysis of positions taken by current biblical interpreters. The "teacher" is regarded as an "authoritarian" paradigm, emphasizing a body of knowledge to be taken in by the reader and as an example of an ethical ideal. The "adviser" is regarded as a "*laissez faire*" paradigm, inspiring the reader to search out a matter and thereby learn. Wyckoff singles out Carl R. Rogers nondirective method as an example of the latter (105).

The "guide" metaphor suggests a "facilitator." In a facilitator paradigm, "the Holy Spirit's involvement in illumination would be as one who interacts with the student" and enlightens as to what is to be known. The Holy Spirit takes the reader further to provide insight into the significance of what was learned and integrates this knowledge with life. Illumination, reflection, insight, and application are all involved. For Wyckoff, the role of the Holy Spirit in biblical interpretation comes closest to that of the facilitator. He sees hints of this in John 16: 13, Ephesians 1:19, and in 2 Corinthians 3:18, where the Holy Spirit is described, respectively, as guide, enlightener, and unveiler.

In chapter 4, the author develops his own pneumatic hermeneutic and analyzes the pros and cons of teacher, adviser, and guide. He does not consider the Holy Spirit as one who provides "text-book" information (104) or acts as "a minimally active 'adviser'" (105). What Wyckoff suggests (73) is strikingly like that of Donald Bloesch's ideas as enunciated in *A Theology of Word & Spirit* and suggested by Clark Pinnock's *Biblical Revelation*.¹ Wyckoff writes, "If that which the Holy Spirit makes known is God's wisdom in a mystery, then the ultimate content of the illuminated message is Christ, his person and his work" (73). Bloesch is frequently cited in Wyckoff's work as is John Calvin. Bloesch affirms in *Theology of Word and Spirit* that it is the Spirit that inspires and illumines the Scripture. It is the "divine revelation [Jesus] that confronts us in the Bible." The Holy Spirit "unfolds the fuller meaning of Scripture."² Similarly, Wyckoff contends that the Holy Spirit illumines and "assists contemporary readers to understand Scripture" (101). He further contends: "When the Holy Spirit illumines Scripture he reveals none other than the being of God himself" (137).

Wyckoff's work averages four to six footnotes per page throughout his one hundred forty two pages of text. This is followed by eight pages of bibliography. Both the citations within the text and the extensive bibliography attest to thorough research. Wyckoff did not limit himself to Protestant scholars but also includes Roman Catholic theologians as Terence Keegan, Avery Dulles, and Raymond E. Brown. He also drew upon Origen, Luther, and Calvin. This reviewer wonders why

1 Clark Pinnock, *Biblical Revelation: The Foundation of Christian Theology* (Chicago: Moody, 1971), 36.

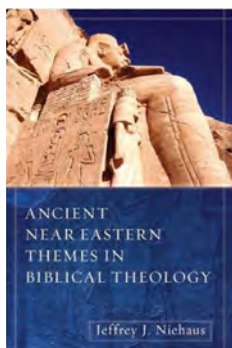
2 Donald Bloesch, *A Theology of Word and Spirit* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992), 14, 118.

Wyckoff did not also draw from Zwingli. Zwingli once wrote, “I understand Scripture only in the way that it interprets itself by the Spirit of God. It does not require any human opinion.”³

Like the work of his fellow Assemblies of God biblical theologian, Gordon Fee, whom he also cites, Wyckoff’s book would appeal to a wide spectrum of evangelical orthodox Christian men and women irrespective of their background and cultural setting with his citations from Chrysostom, LaSor (Jewish), Dulles, Calvin, Greidanus, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Berkhof, and Robert W. Funk (surprisingly), besides fellow Pentecostal writers as Fee, Ervin, and Palma. His mentor, Dr. Bob Patterson, at Baylor University, who directed Wyckoff’s study, is recognized globally as the editor of *The Makers of the Modern Theological Mind* series.

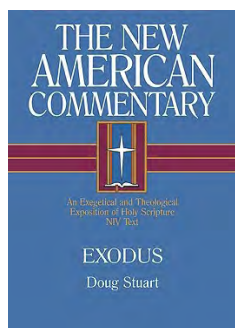
Pneuma and Logos is highly recommended for any theological bookstore, student, professor, or alumnus pursuing an interest in a pneumatic approach to biblical hermeneutics, biblical studies, or preaching.

Woodrow E. Walton, D.Min., is retired after 53 years in the ministry, having served as a pastor, professor, seminary dean, and in short-term mission service in Africa. An Assembly of God minister, he has written *The Five-String Guitar: Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, & Esther* (Dorrance, 2005), articles for *The Journal of the American Academy of Ministry* and the *Africanus Journal*, reviews for *Pneuma Journal*, and a forthcoming article, “The Case for Anonymous Leadership,” for *Pneuma*. He is presently working on a new article “Surely Kin to Me: Memoir and Testament of Faith.” He is a member of the “Other Voices in Biblical Interpretation” study group of the Evangelical Theological Society.



Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology. “Jeffrey Niehaus’s book is wonderfully helpful in explaining the connections between the thought patterns and religious practices of the ancient biblical world and the way these patterns and practices were used by God to prepare the way for his special revelation to Israel. Even though the concepts shared by ancient pagan peoples only imperfectly and dimly reflected the truth, Niehaus shows how the written expressions of those concepts provide us with a backdrop from which to better understand the Bible itself. This is a book that any student or pastor ought to read as a prolegomenon to doing biblical theology.” -Douglas Stuart, Professor of Old Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

Jeffrey J. Niehaus (Ph.D.) is Professor of Old Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and teaches at its Hamilton, Boston and Charlotte campuses.



Exodus (The New American Commentary Vol. 2) is one of the newest works on Exodus to be found. Stuart carries out a careful and thorough exegetical work that, in his words, “tries not to avoid, but to subordinate purely interscholarly interests to the far more important interests of the pastors, missionaries, evangelists, and other workers who will, I hope, find this book a helpful guide to their use of Exodus in Christian ministry.”

Douglas K. Stuart (Ph.D.) is Professor of Old Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and teaches primarily at the Hamilton campus. He is author of many other books including *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth*, co-authored with Gordon Fee (Zondervan), and other commentaries on the Minor Prophets and Ezekiel.

3 English rendering from *Huldreich Zwinglis Samtliche Werke*, Vol. 1, Emil Egli, Georg Finsler, et al., eds. (Berlin, Leipzig, Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1950), 559; Timothy George, transl., *Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1988), 128.

Review of *The Drama of Ephesians: Participating in the Triumph of God* by Timothy G. Gombis (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2010)¹

Sang Soon Kim

In the first chapter, Timothy Gombis presents the main concept of his book: that Paul wrote Ephesians as a drama. Gombis explains Ephesians is not just a theological book but a practical book as well; dramatic words are used clearly to show the triumph of God, actively to call believers to participate in God's triumph, and resoundingly to proclaim His triumph into the world.

In the second chapter, Gombis introduces the characters of this drama: power and authority (1:20-23). Basically Gombis says that power and authority are evil characters, and he explains how these characters are revealed to be the evil one in the Ancient Near East, in the Old Testament and New Testament Bible, in Jesus' era, and in the present day.

In the third chapter, Gombis introduces another character: we, as new creations (1:3-14). We become a new creation and new people of God in Christ. We have been destined to live for the praise of his glory (75). Therefore, we are in the new history.

Then, in the fourth chapter, Gombis presents the storyline of this drama (1:20-2:22). The story line is simple: "What has God done, what is he currently doing, and how does this set the agenda for how we participate in God's work in the world" (85). The point is that God achieves His victory over the evil powers and He makes new humanity. The character of the new humanity is not individual but communal.

Then, in the fifth chapter, Gombis explains how we participate in God's work in the world (3:1-14). As Jesus conquered the powers and authorities through his shameful and humiliating death, "God calls us to imagine creative alternative performances of cruciform weakness that magnify the triumph of God in Christ" (131).

In the sixth chapter, Gombis says, because God empowers churches (which are his temple) to achieve the triumph, we can carry out his mission (3:14-4:16). But we should not forget, we are called to be a member of his temple, the church. Therefore, his mission should be carried out not by individuals but by the community.

Gombis says that the last chapter of Ephesians is the conclusion of this drama; the Divine Warrior (6:10-18). The entire church should be against powers and authorities. As we have seen, already Jesus conquered them on the cross, and God calls us to resist them. Our church's goal is to purify this corrupted world.

Gombis well presents the development of the actors and concepts from the background of the Ancient Near East and Paul's era, focusing on power and authority, glory, imagery, etc. His conclusion for Ephesians also well captures Paul's purpose. I also agree that Christianity has the responsibility to serve the community. But I question his take on Christianity's responsibility to exercise political action. Does Gombis mean that Christianity has to have secular political power to change this evil world? He does give us good examples how we can change our community. He emphasizes the new movement of Christianity in our communities, but we should not ignore that we also live individual lives. Namely, we are each called to be one of the church's members and at the same time we are individually called to be God's warrior. But I think that Gombis misses this individual calling. I believe that Ephesians emphasizes the community in Christ but at the same time an individual life in Christ (5:22-6:9). Gombis seems to emphasize our communal responsibility over our individual calling.

Sang Soon Kim is a Th.M. candidate at Gordon-Conwell.

¹ This book review was originally presented for Exegesis of Ephesians on Dec. 9, 2010 for Professor Aida Besançon Spencer.